



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, OCTOBER 31, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Ms. Becky Kent, Mr. Leo Glavine, Mr. Alfie MacLeod

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we start the daily routine, the subject matter for late debate has been chosen, and I will now read:

Therefore be it resolved that this House ask the Liberal Party to be clear with Nova Scotians, and explain why they want to adopt an energy scheme that will drive up power prices by 30 to 50 per cent.

It was submitted by the honourable member for Queens.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition with the following operative clause:

“WE, the residents of the RIVER DENYS AND SURROUNDING AREAS, call upon the PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA, to **REPAVE** the **RIVER DENYS ROAD BEGINNING AT EXIT 3, TCH 105.**”

There are 288 signatures on this petition, including my own, which I have affixed to it.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition with the operative clause:

“ . . . your petitioners call upon the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to use its powers over the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities, the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (UARB) to deny any General Rate Application presented by NSPI requesting a rate increase in 2013, 2014 and 2015.”

There are 101 who have signed this petition, and I have affixed my name.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition signed by 1,024 residents of Parrsboro and the Shore area. The operative clause reads: We ask the NDP Government to strongly consider a long-term care facility for the Parrsboro area.

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my own signature to the petition, and I so table.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS****STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, may I be permitted to make an introduction first?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. WILSON: Thank you. In the gallery with us today, Mr. Speaker, is Dr. Gus Grant, Registrar and CEO of the College of Physicians and Surgeons for the Province of Nova Scotia. I would ask members to give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our visitors to the gallery and hope they enjoy this afternoon's proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today before you and the members of the Legislature to share and celebrate some of the success in our plan to ensure that families across Nova Scotia - especially seniors - who need doctors, have them where they need them. Today, many families have been waiting too long to see a physician. I know, as members of the Legislature, we hear from residents across the province on this important issue. Many of them are left with no choice but to visit their local emergency department for basic care, and we recognize the importance of ensuring that residents in Nova Scotia have access to primary care, I think, in the appropriate settings.

Mr. Speaker, this puts extra pressure on our emergency departments, our emergency rooms, and is not the kind of care families have told us that they want in their communities across Nova Scotia. We recognize that the old way of doing things had to change. That's why, as a government, we recognized the importance to come up with a plan. We have seen a past government be in power for almost 10 years and doing the same things over and over. We had to change the way we deliver health care here in Nova Scotia so that Nova Scotians could gain access to primary care.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Liberal Party who have been touting the same idea for a number of years, which I think will not work. They're going to force - one of their policies is to force physicians to go to unserved areas of this province. That will not work. We need to ensure that we create an environment that attracts and retains physicians in our

community. We need them to feel welcome in the community, so that they create those connections to rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, today, thousands of families and seniors can look forward to having better and more timely access to doctors in their communities and region. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to officially welcome 12 new family doctors to rural communities across this province. Many of those doctors have already begun to work, or will be starting to see patients, in communities like Yarmouth, Kentville, Elmsdale, Pugwash, Springhill, Parrsboro, Annapolis Royal, Berwick, and Musquodoboit Harbour - this is welcome news for those communities that have experienced ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention of family physicians. And we're not stopping there - we're going to ensure that we help recruit and attract physicians to Cape Breton Island, for example.

Mr. Speaker, families and seniors have told us how important it is for Nova Scotians to have access to doctors close to where they live. That's why we developed the province's first-ever physician resource plan - the other two Parties never did this. We now have a plan to approve patient access to care through better planning and management of the physician workforce and help ensure we have the doctors we need, when and where we need them.

Today's announcement is part of the plan that results from the hard work of the district health authorities across the province and other partners, such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Doctors Nova Scotia, and Dalhousie University Medical School. They are all working together, recognizing the importance of changing the way we did business here in Nova Scotia.

Together, we can improve access to primary care and increase the number of family doctors, especially in rural communities. The province remains committed to supporting the Clinician Assessment for Practice Program, or CAPP, which many members know about. This program assesses the clinical skills of international medical graduate physicians for entry into family practice here in our province.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge Dr. Gus Grant, the registered CEO of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, which operates this program in partnership with the district health authorities, Doctors Nova Scotia, and the Department of Health and Wellness. He has joined us today, as I introduced him earlier.

This year we are welcoming eight international medical graduate physicians to the province as a result of the CAPP. Two of those doctors are based in Yarmouth, and they've been very successful in this program. I encourage all the residents in Nova Scotia to continue to welcome these foreign-trained doctors in that community. I think they've done a good job there, Mr. Speaker.

The others will be located, as I mentioned, in Kentville, Elmsdale, Pugwash, Springhill, Parrsboro, and Musquodoboit Harbour. We know that they are under-serviced in those areas, and we're going to continue to work to ensure that we attract them to more communities.

We've increased the number of return of service agreements, which provide funding for medical education in exchange for doctors' commitment to work in communities where they are needed. This program is paying off, with four new doctors recently setting up practice in Annapolis Royal, Berwick, Musquodoboit Harbour, and Springhill. Five other family medicine residents have committed to work in Nova Scotia communities when they complete their residency program in 2013. We're very proud, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is working.

We've also expanded the family medicine residency training program to the Annapolis Valley, introduced a new emergency department coverage program, and opened more collaborative emergency centres, which are proving to be a valuable recruitment tool. Many doctors have told me that they have expressed an interest in working in a collaborative emergency concept or centre.

These initiatives are all part of our plan to improve access to doctors and other health care providers, providing better care sooner and, for sure, Mr. Speaker, making life better for families here in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Health and Wellness for an advance copy of his statement. I think we need to start at the very beginning by saying that this is not so much about the work of the NDP Government, but on behalf of the caucus, acknowledge the efforts of the district health authorities, College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Dalhousie Medical School for their respective roles in ensuring the delivery of 12 new family doctors to rural communities throughout Nova Scotia. Without the hard work and dedication of these entities, this ministerial statement would not be happening. For the communities fortunate enough to find themselves on the list today, these new physicians are largely replacing physicians who have either retired or left the practice of family medicine in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there are still about 60,000 Nova Scotians without access to a family physician. I could list all of the communities. However, Bridgewater is in desperate need of family physicians; Shelburne has lost three family physicians in the last nine months - 5,000 patients without a family doctor. One of these doctors was relatively new to the community. Kingston/Greenwood could use two new physicians yesterday; Digby, two doctors today, but there will be one by Christmas - one left at Christmastime.

When we talk about the situation, how dire it is in Digby - we had a call today from the husband of a lady in hospital for eight days. The doctor is too busy to sign her out with oxygen to go home. That's how desperate the situation is there.

Recently, when our caucus was in Baddeck, I learned that the local hospital there is holding their breath, knowing that the family physicians in the community are getting much older and it will only be a matter of time when this community will be without the full access of primary health care in their community. What I am saying is that today's ministerial statement is a snapshot in time and the work is far from over.

I note with interest the minister mentioned Collaborative Emergency Centres - even these centres have experienced closures due to the lack of physicians. While recruitment is important, retention is equally too. I understand one of the three physicians who left Shelburne was new to the community and hadn't even had the chance to build up much of a practice. What is this government doing when it comes to retention? Nothing is in this statement about retention other than a passing mention of the word retention.

The work is far from over. That is why we in the Liberal caucus believe that paying tuition for 20 physicians a year for five years in return for service in the underserved communities is a good idea. It has worked perfectly for the Canadian military for half a century. A constant, more predictable supply of physicians is what we need. While we know there is no requirement for this physician to stay beyond their five-year commitment, we do know that funding of a rural clerkship program that introduces medical students in longer term rotations in a rural community also enhances the likelihood that a student will want to go back to that community once they graduate.

That is why the Liberal caucus has proposed a bill that would see the province fund Dalhousie Medical School to offer such a program. It was interesting speaking to a Nova Scotian who went to the medical school at McGill; Nova Scotia paid her tuition to go to Montreal to study medicine in French so she could come back home to a francophone community in Nova Scotia. She wanted to come back here desperately but guess what? She did not get to come back here as the residency-matching program through CaRMS did not facilitate this. We have lost a bright francophone medical graduate to New Brunswick through the residency-matching program. In speaking to the dean of the medical school, I am to understand that the ideal is to have 1.2 residency positions for every one graduate. Nova Scotia doesn't meet that mark. This is an issue.

In closing I would like to congratulate the district health authorities, the Dalhousie Medical School, the College of Physicians and Surgeons for their hard work and dedication - without you we wouldn't be having this ministerial statement today and what the minister really needs to be saying to the Premier is that when he goes to Shelburne with the Committee on Law Amendments, bring doctors. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you. A great statement from my colleague from the Liberal Party and I have to say a lot of heat and passion in that one and I want to thank him for that. I do want to thank the minister for providing me with a copy of his remarks well in advance. With the previous minister, the practice had been to be a little late in getting these to us in time so it was good to get them way ahead. (Interruptions) I like this shooting around here, this is great.

There is no doubt that the addition of 12 physicians in rural Nova Scotia is timely news, coming as it does during Family Doctor Week. For many families in rural parts of our province, this announcement will come as a relief. Having a family doctor means moms and dads will have to deal with a little less stress when their baby is sick or they need a physical for work. It means they will know who to call and they will have the peace of mind of having a health care provider who knows their history.

I want to join my colleagues in congratulating the district health authorities, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Doctors Nova Scotia, Dalhousie University Medical School for their work in recruiting the dozens of family doctors. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I am pleased to welcome these new physicians to our province and to wish them success and fulfillment in their practices.

I see health care as a balance. Today the family doctor side of that scale just rose a little bit. That's a good thing but there are many parts of that scale that are way too far down at this point or way too far up. The issue of internationally trained doctors is one that has concerned me for some time. In a lot of cases it does bring in a little bit of an ethical dilemma because a lot of times these individuals do come from places that need doctors as well. How do we, as Canadians, allow that to happen when so many parts of the world need doctors as much as we do?

We do have a number of options. The member for Kings West brought that up - there is a perfectly good medical school here in Halifax, here in Nova Scotia, that can provide us with a supply of doctors that are hopefully from here or near here and able to work here. Even though there are a number of those doctors who are coming to Yarmouth, and of course we welcome them here, one doctor is closing his practice. Dr. Wyman is closing after a long career as a physician and as we know when these doctors retire, they leave 2,000 to 3,000 patients without a doctor. Hopefully the new supply will be able to pick some of those up but at the same time we still know that not all of those individuals will be able to get a new doctor.

The other thing that I want to talk about today is that since the scale is a little off balance, the IWK lost power and was forced once again to cancel appointments and surgeries. This is the third time - third time, Mr. Speaker - under the NDP Government that there have been serious disruptions to this important health service. Families with children at the IWK are already dealing with a sick child. To make an already difficult situation worse because of a short electrical storm would be devastating to many of those families.

There is clearly a problem. The reliability of NSP and the backup power source need to be addressed soon, as it should have been back in June, to ensure that there will be no more unnecessary surgery cancelations and delays.

Another idea where the scales are tipped is the area of long-term care. Mr. Speaker. For every family that will feel relief as a result of today's good news announcement, there are many other families who continue to struggle under the burden of having loved ones on the long-term care wait-list. As of September, there are 2,228 seniors on that list. That means more than 2,000 families who are worried and frustrated that their mother, aunt and grandfather aren't getting the kind of care that they need, even though that person contributed their whole lives and played by all the rules. There are 2,228 people who don't know who to call. They don't know where to turn and they don't have any peace of mind.

That worry, frustration and heartache is largely due to NDP inaction. In three years, the NDP have not added a single long-term care bed to the system. Not only have they not announced any new beds, but they put the kibosh on 228 beds that were already planned and promised. In addition, there are 474 beds mentioned in the long-term care strategy that have not yet been completed by this NDP Government. Not surprising, the wait-list has grown. When the NDP took over, there were 1,537 people waiting for a nursing home bed; as of last month, that number ballooned to 2,228 people. That's an increase of nearly 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind members that those are not just statistics, not just simply numbers - they represent Nova Scotians who are ill and deserve better. They represent families who are exhausted and worried about their loved ones.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we in the PC caucus welcome the new physicians and are happy for the families. (Interruptions) Then listen to the beginning here. The little hot stuff in the middle they don't want to come to terms on, but the announcement he has today. We in the PC caucus welcome the new physicians and are happy for the families that will benefit from them. We are now urging the minister to turn his attention to long-term care and the many people who need that level of care. With that, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, if I might be permitted to do some introductions before I read my ministerial statement?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. PARIS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, in the gallery we have representatives from companies and universities from across the Province of Nova Scotia who have received

Productivity and Innovation Vouchers. I would like to introduce them and ask if they would please stand as I call out their name and the name of their organization. I will apologize in advance as I go through this list if I mispronounce the odd name here and there, so here it goes.

Dr. Pletner, Intelligent Dynamics; Dr. Ron Layden, Bluelight Analytics; Ulrile Bahr-Gedalia, Thorasys; Dr. Maurice Laycock, Jellett Rapid Testing; Marlene Moore, Green Power Labs; Damien Yohn, Dr. David P. Morris; Paul Nurse, Gravity Communications; John Read, Colibri Software; Greg Fong, LightSail Canada; Peggy Crawford, Acadia University; Heather Lunan, Pie r Squared; Thomas Gregoire and Shaun Marshall, VITIS Mobile Winery Services; Jonathan Roberts, Mount Saint Vincent University; Kevin Dunn, Dalhousie University; Carime Parquet, Chelation Partners; Dr. Michael Dennis, Performance Genomics; Sue Coueslan, Genome Atlantic; Rufus, B.D.Rae Waste Management; Lorraine Creaser, Rivers of Avondale Vineyard; Stuart Creaser, Rivers of Avondale Vineyard; Tim Cranston, Louisbourg Seafoods; Gina Funicelli, Saint Mary's University; and last but certainly not least, Gregor Ash.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to give these individuals a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery and hope that they enjoy this afternoon's proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about how this government is helping to foster innovation in small business throughout the province. Investment in innovation is crucial in today's changing and competitive world. Businesses of all sizes are striving to become more productive and more competitive. Through our jobsHere plan, this government is focused on helping them do just that.

Today I'm pleased to announce that 46 small businesses will benefit from the province's Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program. These companies, some of which are represented here in the gallery today, will give advice and get advice in services from our university and our college experts. From research to engineering, prototyping to field testing, they will get the support that they need to take their ideas and their products to the next level. During the past five years this program has helped dozens of small businesses from around the province. In fact, today's announcement brings the total to nearly 200.

This government is making strategic investments to create good jobs and grow Nova Scotia's economy. This voucher program is a perfect example. To continue innovation and to continue progress, this government increased funding for the voucher

program and added a second tier of vouchers for past recipients so that they can maintain momentum and add to the achievements gained from the first voucher.

Mr. Speaker, 32 businesses and communities across Nova Scotia are getting \$15,000 vouchers to help them link to the wealth of expertise available from Nova Scotia's academic institutions - businesses like Stomp Labs in Sydney, Ditch Doctor Atlantic Limited in Glenholme, Gravity Communications in Sackville, the Rivers of Avondale Vineyard in Newport, and Intelligent Dynamics Canada in Jordan Falls.

Fourteen businesses are getting \$25,000 vouchers to keep their innovative ideas moving forward. This morning, my colleague the Honourable Maurice Smith, visited BioNovations in Antigonish, to learn more about their product first-hand. Last year this company leveraged its first-tier voucher to develop a prototype for a new live seafood holding and transportation system. This year, thanks to a second-tier voucher, the company will work with the Marine Research Centre at the Université Sainte-Anne to conduct further research and development.

I'd also like to mention Clare Machine Works in Meteghan, which also uses second-tier voucher to continue work on its Bait Savour product which allows fishers to automatically bait their lobster traps, making the process safer and more cost effective.

Mr. Speaker, the companies I've mentioned today are only a few of the countless examples that exhibit Nova Scotia's innovative spirit. Our province is on the brink of some of the biggest opportunities in our history. Now, more than ever, Nova Scotia must embrace innovation and support growth to help get our people and businesses ready. This government is doing just that; we are doing just that with programs like the Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program. Just ask any of the recipients who are in the gallery today.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge that I should have referenced, when I spoke about the member on this side of the House, I should have referred to him as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. So I do apologize for that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his remarks today. Our caucus would like to congratulate the businesses that receive support under the Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program. Your commitment to your community, employees, and industry, is important in shaping our provincial economy - you are the true drivers of the private sector. (Applause) We

thank all small businesses in this province and those here in the gallery today for the invaluable work they do in employing Nova Scotians and supporting families.

Productivity and innovation are two critical factors for economic growth in this province. Small businesses know that and don't have to be lectured or even instructed by politicians or bureaucrats; in fact, provincial economies should revolve around private sector economic activity, as opposed to having departments telling entrepreneurs how to succeed. Entrepreneurial spirit leads to creation of jobs and it is this spirit that we have to foster.

Given our government's track record on economic development, we should renew our efforts to support economic growth, but not interfere with it. The \$15,000 and \$25,000, respective vouchers are valuable for the businesses that will receive these funds, but this aggregate amount pales in comparison to the \$0.5 billion we've given the corporations.

Today's recognition of small business innovation should be celebrated, but not by government or by politicians but by the very people who rely on innovative products and services for their survival - the private sector.

In closing, today should be an indicator of government's role in the provincial economy. Give entrepreneurs the tools they need, create an environment built for growth, and then get out of the way and let them prosper. (Applause)

Again, we congratulate the small businesses that are focused on productivity, innovation, job creation, and moving our province forward. Small businesses aren't part of the economy - they are the economy. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the minister for a copy of his remarks in advance, and I'd also like to thank the member for Glace Bay for his remarks. We, as the PC caucus, would also like to congratulate all 46 small businesses that received their funding today.

Small businesses are vital to our province and our economy. Nova Scotians have always had a strong entrepreneurial spirit. We have thousands of people who devote themselves to running a small business in this province. They work extremely hard, use their passion to employ a few people, and give back to their society. They defy all obstacles, manoeuvre change, and they are always innovating to survive in a very competitive global marketplace.

Our universities are also an important resource we have in our province. Universities provide a wealth of knowledge and skills that are important to all our small businesses. Universities are incubators for bright ideas and new technology that come from

people who gather there. I remember hearing a story of a winemaker in the Valley who was unable to sell his product because of sediment in the bottom of his bottles, but after partnering with Acadia University, they were able to remove the sediment and make that product more valuable.

Mr. Speaker, innovation is the key to helping small businesses survive. Unfortunately, small and medium businesses have been harmed by this government's unfriendly business policies. Whole sectors have been targeted by this government, like pharmacists, road builders, insurance brokers, non-unionized employers and, most recently, our junior hockey league. The NDP's decision to raise the HST to the highest in the country and its decision to drive up power rates to beyond what people can afford are hurting our small businesses and our universities' ability to compete.

We have a real opportunity in our province but we need to start by investing in ourselves. Investments in our people and in education are better deals in the long run than bailouts to multi-million dollar, international corporations. Our people have the spirit and they have the drive. Government needs to free up their ability by cutting government red tape and allowing them to make decisions on how to best run their own businesses.

I will just end on this note: in the International Year of Cooperatives, we can all learn a lot from inspiring people who work together to run a small business and provide services and employment for the greater good of the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1555

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas professionals who work in food safety are dedicated to ensuring Nova Scotians are not affected by foodborne illnesses; and

Whereas the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors presents a national award to a professional who has served on this organization's executive council and demonstrated outstanding service while in office; and

Whereas Barry MacGregor, Regional Manager of Food Safety with the Department of Agriculture, is the 2012 recipient of this award in recognition of his dedication to food safety for Nova Scotians and all Canadians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Barry MacGregor on receiving the 2012 Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors' national award and recognize the expertise that he provides Nova Scotians through his work in the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 1556

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas a key element of Nova Scotia's future prosperity will be our ability to innovate and build needed and marketable solutions to challenges here at home and around the world, solutions that will result in good jobs for recent university graduates and an opportunity for them to build a good life here in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas government is supporting our university sector to find bright new ideas, and our business leaders to invest in research that will help make Nova Scotia a world leader in many fields such as health care, engineering, information technology, and ocean technology; and

Whereas Statistics Canada announced yesterday that growth in estimated research and development expenditures in the higher education sector in Nova Scotia increased by almost \$30 million last year, with support from this government, and it outpaced the national average;

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislature congratulate our universities and business leaders for the increase in research expenditures and urge that we continue to work together to see our investment levels outpace the national average.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1557

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas October 29th through November 2nd is Canadian Patient Safety Week and the goal of this week is to increase awareness of patient safety issues and share information about best practices in patient safety at national, regional, and local levels; and

Whereas there have been between 9,000 and 24,000 Canadians who die every year as a result of otherwise preventable events; and

Whereas the theme of this year's Canadian Patient Safety Week - Ask. Listen. Talk. - encourages all health care professionals, patients, clients, residents, and their families to ask questions, listen carefully, and talk openly about concerns;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize Patient Safety Week and join me in encouraging all Nova Scotians to embrace the theme - Ask. Listen. Talk. - when it comes to patient safety.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 1558

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the previous government had Nova Scotia on the road to a \$1.4 billion deficit; and

Whereas this government put a plan in place that brought sense to the province's finances through strong financial discipline that saw departmental spending come in under budget three years in a row; and

Whereas the Dominion Bond Rating Service recognized this hard work by revising Nova Scotia's outlook from stable to positive, citing the province's successful efforts to restrain spending growth and its demonstrated ability to meet or exceed financial targets;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize that the province was on the road to a \$1.4 billion deficit but through strong financial management we have restored sense to the province's finances and have been recognized for this work, and these are the facts about Nova Scotia's finances.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 1559

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Nova Scotia's unemployment rate is lower today than it was when this government came into office and continues to be the lowest in our region; and

Whereas there are 8,800 more Nova Scotians employed today; and

Whereas employment in Nova Scotia is now above the pre-recession peak;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize that Nova Scotia's unemployment rate is lower today than it was in June 2009 and that there are 8,800 more Nova Scotians employed today, and these are the facts about Nova Scotia's economy.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm having a hard time hearing the resolution so I would ask the honourable members to please keep it down so I can at least listen to the resolution.

AN HON. MEMBER: I apologize.

MR. SPEAKER: No, don't apologize, just I want to hear the resolution.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1560

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I accept the apology.

Mr. Speaker I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the work of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia has been strengthening rural communities across the province for a full century; and

Whereas the institutes provide Nova Scotia women with opportunities to enhance their quality of life through education and personal development, and to help them meet the changing needs of their local and global communities; and

Whereas the institutes are the driving force behind important initiatives such as Select Nova Scotia, which is government's campaign to encourage Nova Scotians to buy local food and support local farmers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate members of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia for 100 years of dedicated service to communities across the province and the work they do to support women as they work to enhance their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1561

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Environment, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Resource Recovery Fund Board is a non-profit organization that helps Nova Scotians reduce, reuse and recycle materials rather than throwing them away; and

Whereas this September the RRFB appointed Jeff MacCallum as its new chief executive officer; and

Whereas Mr. MacCallum holds a Masters of Business Administration and Bachelor of Commerce, has a wealth of experience in economic development, and has worked with the RRFB for the past five years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate Mr. MacCallum on his appointment and wish him every success in his new position as CEO at the Resource Recovery Fund Board.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1562

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Environment, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Resource Recovery Fund Board is a key partner in the province's effort to reduce, reuse and recycle our solid waste in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this October, Bill Ring retired as the chief executive officer of the RRFB, a position he held for seven years; and

Whereas we owe Mr. Ring a debt of gratitude for his excellent leadership of the RRFB, helping to shape it into the organization it is today;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature wish Mr. Bill Ring well and thank him for his service to the people of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of the House to guests visiting us today in the east gallery. I would ask them to stand. Mr. and Mrs. Kevin and Shirley MacPherson are visiting us. They are formerly from Pictou and now back in the HRM, and I'd like members to extend a warm welcome to our guests. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery and hope that they enjoy this afternoon's proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: In the gallery opposite is a young gentleman, Adam Grant, who is a senior policy analyst with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. Adam thought he would drop by to watch proceedings and is one of the people who actually worked very hard to ensure this legislation happened today and I would appreciate if the House would give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 107 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 77 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Collection Agencies Act; and Chapter 91 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Consumer Creditors' Conduct Act, to Ensure the Respectful Collection and Responsible Management of Debt. (Hon. John MacDonell)

Bill No. 108 - Entitled an Act to Provide for an Accounting of the Funds Held by the Bluenose II Preservation Trust Society. (Mr. Allan MacMaster)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford-Birch Cove.

RESOLUTION NO. 1563

MS. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the NDP Government promised Nova Scotians a treat - no tax increases and a balanced budget - but instead delivered tricks - a 25 per cent hike in the HST and continued deficit budgets; and

Whereas it is true the Dexter Government is haunted by the ghost of Tory Overspending Past, with images of electric toilet seats, a ballooning debt, and free mini ATVs swirling about, but that hardly justifies the gutting of our education system; and

Whereas this Nosferatu-like government has sucked the lifeblood out of many communities in southwest Nova Scotia by cancelling the Yarmouth ferry, sending minority seats to the graveyard, and making millions of dollars disappear by not getting job guarantees when it gave money to big corporations;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly chastise this government and not allow it to go out to trick or treat this evening or to govern after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1564

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Lukas Munroe of Scotch Village has been playing the fiddle for the past 15 years and has become very well-known around the Maritime Provinces for his unique style of bluegrass, along with his great baritone harmony when playing with the band Shadow River; and

Whereas at the recent 28th Annual Eastern Canadian Bluegrass Musical Awards held in Truro, Lukas Munroe was named Fiddle Player of the Year, playing with the band Blue Tie Affair, while Shadow River was named Bluegrass Band of the Year; and

Whereas Lukas Munroe continues to enjoy playing the fiddle, whether it be in front of a large audience or just for family and friends, and will more than likely go down in Maritime music history with established artists such as Don Messer and Keith Ross;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lukas Munroe for his outstanding musical ability, while wishing him nothing but continued future success in Bluegrass fiddling.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1565

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Mike and Mary Penny have operated their 205-acre woodlot in Lochaber since 1988; and

Whereas the Penny's woodlot, which no longer uses pesticides, is a mixture of hardwood, fir, spruce, and Christmas trees, the latter which regenerates itself; and

Whereas on September 22nd Mike and Mary Penny were presented with the 2012 Eastern Nova Scotia Woodlot Owner of the Year Award in a ceremony held by the Department of Natural Resources;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House congratulate the Pennys on their Eastern Nova Scotia Woodlot Owner of the Year Award, and wish them all the best for continued success with their woodlot.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1566

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas on Friday, June 13th, the Chester Relay for Life took place at the Chester Area Middle School; and

Whereas the teams raised over \$62,000, which is the most raised in the event's history; and

Whereas the Chester Relay for Life in the past seven years has raised over \$360,000 for cancer research;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate and thank all volunteers and participants for their hard work and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 1567

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia awarded its most important arts and culture prizes at the 7th Creative Nova Scotia Awards Gala held on October 26th at the Brewery Market, hosted by the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council; and

Whereas the winner of the 2012 Portia White Prize, which recognizes cultural and artistic excellence on the part of a Nova Scotian artist who has attained professional status, mastery and recognition in their discipline, and which includes an \$18,000 cash award, is celebrated film director, playwright, and advocate for the arts, Thom Fitzgerald; and

Whereas, as is the privilege of each year's winner, Mr. Fitzgerald has named the Atlantic Fringe Festival, Halifax's home of emerging and innovative theatre, to receive the \$7,000 Protégé Prize;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council for its ongoing work in supporting artists and the arts, and congratulate Thom Fitzgerald on being the recipient of the 2012 Portia White Prize, and also congratulate the Atlantic Fringe Festival on winning the Protégé Prize.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

RESOLUTION NO. 1568

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Becky's Daycare in Waverley recently celebrated 20 years of providing care, attentive child-care services for children ranging in age from five months to 10 years; and

Whereas Becky's Daycare, owned and operated by Bev Beeswanger, employs 26 teachers, an on-site cook to prepare nutritious meals, and an on-site cleaner to keep the facility tidy, and features a variety of indoor and outdoor play areas; and

Whereas Becky's Daycare has undergone two expansions, one in 2006 and again in 2010, to service the needs of the 150 children who attend her facility from the surrounding communities;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly extend congratulations to owner/operator of Becky's Day Care, Bev Beeswanger and wish her continued success.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education.

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, with your permission may I do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Most Certainly.

MS. JENNEX: Thank you very much. I would like the House to recognize two of my dear friends who are here from Wolfville today, Joan and Roger Boutilier. If they could rise to receive a warm welcome from the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all of our guests to the gallery and hope they enjoy this afternoon's proceedings.

The honourable Minister of Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1569

HON. RAMONA JENNEX: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Acadia University Sensory Motor Instructional Leadership Experience Program (SMILE) is celebrating 30 years of community service; and

Whereas the Acadia University SMILE Program has always served and supported the needs of individuals with a physical disability, intellectual handicap, or adversity of any sort; and

Whereas the Acadia University SMILE Program continues to be a shining example of community activism, volunteerism and advocacy, while promoting a spirit of inclusiveness, understanding and empathy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the contributions made by the Acadia University SMILE Program to not only their local community, but to a larger community of advocates of those of varying ability and skills.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

RESOLUTION NO. 1570

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the causes of social injustice are often revealed through thoughtful and provocative writing; and

Whereas the Beacon Award is awarded to encourage the writing and publication of fiction that focuses on social injustice; and

Whereas on September 26, 2012, Charlotte Mendel of Enfield was awarded a Beacon Award for her manuscript *Turn Us Away*;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate Charlotte Mendel on her Beacon Award and wishes her further success in her future writing endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1571

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Wilson's Shopping Centre in Barrington Passage has been recognized by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Nova Scotia Chapter, with the 2012 Maritime Philanthropist Award as an outstanding small business philanthropist; and

Whereas the past four years Wilson's Shopping Centre has hosted an amazing fundraiser called Ladies' Gala Night, where their store is transformed into a women's retreat with exhibitors, guest speakers and entertainment, all geared at pampering women and raising money for the IWK Health Centre; and

Whereas Wilson's Shopping Centre owners Dave Wilson and Lois Wilson and their staff have raised in excess of \$48,000 for the IWK Health Centre through their Ladies' Gala Night event over the past four years;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Wilson's Shopping Centre for receiving the Small Business Philanthropist Award for 2012, from the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Nova Scotia Chapter.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1572

HON. LEONARD PREYRA: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Stephanie Sajatovich is a math, science and physics teacher at Armbrae Academy who fosters critical thinking and a genuine enthusiasm for the sciences among her students; and

Whereas the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence honour outstanding elementary and secondary school teachers who, through the innovative use of information and communication technologies in the classroom, help students to develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed; and

Whereas with the enthusiastic support of students and parents, Stephanie Sajatovich is now one of only 94 nationwide recipients of the 2012 Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognizes Stephanie Sajatovich for her commitment to innovative and engaging teaching that inspires her students and extends congratulations on this prestigious award.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1573

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Jennifer Wilcox, age 16, from Oliver Road in Pictou County, an army cadet with the 219 Army Cadet Corps of New Glasgow, has earned a national award for reaching the requirements of the Army Cadets National Star of Excellence - Programs Level I; and

Whereas Jennifer Wilcox is the first person in Canada to win this award and has received a special badge in recognition of winning this prestigious award; and

Whereas this award was presented to Jennifer on her numerous accomplishments in the army cadet program, such as playing the bagpipes, being a member of the biathlon and marksmanship team, and for volunteering;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulates Jennifer Wilcox for being the first army cadet in Canada to win the national Star of Excellence and wishes her success in her future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour.

RESOLUTION NO. 1574

MR. JIM BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas across the world, the month of November is frequently being referred to as Movember; and

Whereas Movember challenges men to start the month of November clean shaven and proceed to grow a mustache to raise awareness and funds for prostate cancer; and

Whereas prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Nova Scotia with an estimated 910 men diagnosed in 2010 alone;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in marking November as Movember and commend Prostate Cancer Canada for promoting awareness of prostate cancer in such a public and relatable manner.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1575

MS. BEKCY KENT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague, the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Colchester Regional Hospital Auxiliary has been raising funds for patient and hospital needs as well as providing excellent volunteer services to the community hospital since the 1920s; and

Whereas the auxiliary contributes approximately \$100,000 annually through the efforts of the Hospital Hubhub and the Colchester Regional Hospital Gift & Coffee Shop as well as providing funding for continued education for hospital staff and two bursaries awarded yearly to high school students; and

Whereas the Colchester Regional Hospital Auxiliary celebrated its 90th Anniversary on October 24, 2012;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature extends a thank you to the Colchester Regional Hospital Auxiliary for providing 90 years of service to the Colchester Regional Hospital and community and wishes them many more successful years of fundraising and providing volunteer support.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1576

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Astral Drive Junior High School student Taylor Ingram, 13 years old, of Cole Harbour came in first of 3,400 participants in the Blue Nose Youth Run this past May in Halifax; and

Whereas for 18 months prior to the race, Taylor had been doing speed workouts and other training with Dartmouth Athletics and the Halifax club; and

Whereas Taylor's father, Paul Ingram, says Taylor won the Youth Running Series for 2011 for his age group last November and credits coach Rich Lehman with doing a great job of motivating all the youth runners;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Taylor Ingram of Cole Harbour for the hard work, determination and perseverance that led him to the first place position in the Blue Nose Youth Run held May 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1577

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Pengrowth Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship Program provides scholarships and grants to students pursuing careers in energy-related studies, trades or technology programs; and

Whereas recipients are chosen based on academic achievement, community involvement and extracurricular activities, in addition to a demonstrated interest in the Nova Scotia energy sector; and

Whereas Nicholas van Dyk of North Queens Rural High School has been awarded a 2012 Pengrowth Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Nicholas van Dyk on having received a 2012 Pengrowth Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1578

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Judge Clyde Finlay Macdonald was born in Sunnybrae, Pictou County, went on to become a lawyer and later was appointed a Provincial Court Judge, handling thousands of cases before the court; and

Whereas Judge Clyde Macdonald has written a total of 10 books, many on war veterans and community history, with the proceeds going to the Pictou County Roots Society; and

Whereas Judge Macdonald and the Pictou County Roots Society will unveil a war memorial with 88 names in Sunnybrae on November 10th, in a ceremony that adds and further documents the lives of Pictonians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Judge Clyde F. Macdonald for his contributions to the recorded history of Pictou County and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

RESOLUTION NO. 1579

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Program is internationally recognized for acknowledging the leadership of young people throughout the Commonwealth; and

Whereas Morgan Skinner of Timberlea has been awarded her bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award; and

Whereas Morgan's dedication and commitment exemplify the qualities required to achieve this prestigious award;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Morgan Skinner on receiving her bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award with best wishes and good luck in her future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RESOLUTION NO. 1580

MR. GARY RAMEY: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Nova Scotians have had to deal with the slowest economic growth in the past 20 years and this government is committed to doing things differently; and

Whereas our province is on the cusp of several game-changing projects that will provide good jobs for Nova Scotians that will allow them to stay here at home; and

Whereas despite the short-term economic challenges that many provinces are facing, private- and public-sector analysts expect Nova Scotia to experience improved economic growth over the medium and long term;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly remind the Opposition that pessimistic political posturing does not change the facts about Nova Scotia's economy.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1581

MR. BRIAN SKABAR: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas community organizations for youth can play an important role in their development; and

Whereas Don Miller runs the First Baptist Church youth group in Amherst, which welcomes all teens regardless of their religion and beliefs; and

Whereas Don Miller has used his theatrical background for the past 22 years to help provide an environment where teens can develop and showcase their strengths to the community during a dessert theatre production;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join me in commending Don Miller for his efforts to help the youth of Cumberland North find the confidence in themselves that will enable them to reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1582

MR. JIM MORTON: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Doris and Charles Keddy bought their first farm in 1977, taking on the challenge of meeting the growing demand for Nova Scotia-grown strawberry plants; and

Whereas Doris and Charles, joined by their son Phillip and about 75 seasonal employees, harvested 19 million strawberry plants last year, two-thirds of which were exported to Florida; and

Whereas Keddy Nurseries has expanded its products to include raspberry canes, asparagus crowns, high bush blueberries, rhubarb roots, and more recently, sweet potatoes on a farm that has grown to 350 acres of land;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the Keddy family for their enthusiasm and hard work and for their dedication and success in growing a Nova Scotia agribusiness that competes in the global marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RESOLUTION NO. 1583

MS. PAM BIRDSALL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas this Fall the Bluenose II, the iconic ship that is the symbol of our proud boatbuilding heritage, was re-launched into the waters of Lunenburg Harbour; and

Whereas Clifford Hirtle of Dayspring has been confirmed as one of the craftsmen who worked on the original Bluenose, and his son Warren Hirtle was with the Smith and Rhuland yard during the construction of the Bluenose II in the early 1960s; and

Whereas Warren Hirtle's sons, Brian and Gary Hirtle, both worked with Snyder's Shipyard on the Bluenose II rebuild, and Gary's son Jason Hirtle works with Lunenburg Industrial Foundry and Engineering, also on the Bluenose II rebuild project, making four generations of one family all working on variations of the iconic ship;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize the exemplary craftsmanship and skill exhibited by the Hirtle family of Dayspring, who have seen four generations working on Nova Scotia's most famous export.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1584

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas in May, the Antigonish Lions Club hosted the Lions Club International Multiple District N Convention, with 250 delegates from across the Atlantic Provinces in attendance; and

Whereas this year also marks the 50th Anniversary of the Antigonish Lions Club as a service club in our community; and

Whereas the Antigonish Lions Club is a great asset to our community, doing work in areas such as transportation for people with physical challenges and raising funds for the food bank;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Antigonish Lions Club on their 50th Anniversary and thank all the past and present members for the work they do in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1585

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas on June 9, 2012 the Bay Relay For Life took place at Sir John A. Macdonald High School in Tantallon, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this year the teams raised over \$36,000 for cancer research; and

Whereas together we celebrate, remember and fight back against cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate and thank all volunteers who helped plan the 2012 Bay Relay For Life as well as everyone who participated.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1586

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas firefighters are a rare breed of men and women who risk their lives daily responding to emergencies across the province and spend what little time they have left educating the public and raising awareness about fire safety; and

Whereas this year the Westphal-Cole Harbour Firefighters Association is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in the community; and

Whereas members marked the occasion with tours of Station No. 18, on Main Street in Dartmouth, and hosted an open house at Station No. 17, on Cole Harbour Road, on September 22nd, including firefighting artifacts, a photo slide show and operational demonstrations;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize the great work that the firefighters across Nova Scotia do every day and congratulate the past and present members of the Westphal-Cole Harbour Firefighters Association on the group's 50th Anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1587

HON. JOHN MACDONELL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas fire protection was one of the first public services; and

Whereas fire protection has expanded to include first response in many types of emergencies; and

Whereas on November 3, 2012 Shubenacadie and District Fire and Emergency Services will celebrate 50 years of continuous service to its community and surrounding area; and

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the members of the Shubenacadie and District Fire and Emergency Services on their anniversary and thank them for their much needed public service.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1588

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Barrington Municipal High School teacher, Wade Banks, has been recognized for going above and beyond expectations to promote health and wellness, both in and out of the classroom, with the provincial and national awards for health education; and

Whereas Wade Banks is the 2012 co-recipient of the Physical and Health Education Canada's national Health Educator Award, as well as the 2012 recipient of the Nova Scotia Health Educator Award; and

Whereas Wade Banks has been instrumental in implementing the new Healthy Living Grades 7 to 9 curriculum, and has developed various resources and presentations that support and reflect the nature of new curriculum;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly congratulate Barrington Municipal High School teacher, Wade Banks, for receiving the Physical Health Education Canada's 2012 national Health Educator Award as well as the 2012 Nova Scotia Health Educator Award.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1589

HON. CHARLIE PARKER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Latisha Benoit of Abercrombie, Pictou County, is an accomplished dressage rider and this year qualified to be a member of the Nova Scotia Equestrian Federation's 2012 Team of 16, jumping and reining at the Canadian Interprovincial Equestrian Championships in Bromont, Quebec, September 20 to 23, 2012; and

Whereas Latisha has been riding horses for six years and competed at the Canadian Interprovincial Equestrian Champions in Quebec on her horse Emma, in the Junior Dressage Championships, and placed seventh in the individual awards; and

Whereas in the team awards the Nova Scotia Equestrian Team won the overall silver medal for its members' performance in dressage, jumping and reining;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank Latisha Benoit and her horse Emma for being part of the 2012 Nova Scotia Equestrian Federation Team and her dedication to her sport, and wish her continued success in her riding career.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1590

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas it is often said that learning is a lifelong activity that enriches your experiences and gives you a better chance at success in whatever you choose to do; and

Whereas after raising three children, opening a preschool and spending 17 years on her post-secondary education, Sadie Harris, of Cole Harbour, recently graduated from Saint Mary's University with a Bachelor of Arts degree, at the tender young age of 72; and

Whereas Sadie had not attended school since 1960 and was one of only a few students in her graduating class that received her university degree Magna Cum Laude;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join together to commend Sadie Harris on her decision to go back to school, after achieving so much in life, and also congratulate her on receiving her degree with great honour from Saint Mary's University.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 1591

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Truro-Bible Hill, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas 18-year-old Karley Hewitt, of Bible Hill, spent two weeks in Rwanda this past summer as a World Vision Youth Ambassador and would like to have a career working with the United Nations; and

Whereas during Ms. Hewitt's two week stay in Rwanda, she was able to see World Vision's area development programs in action as well as participate in a youth forum with African leaders and youth from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania; and

Whereas Karley Hewitt was inspired by the hope she saw among the youth, as well as witnessing the strong sense of community and welcoming atmosphere, despite the lack of material assets;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Karley Hewitt for being chosen to participate in the World Vision Youth Ambassador Program and applaud her desire to work with people in developing countries.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1592

MS. BECKY KENT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Tom and Pat Harmes, of Eastern Passage, have been volunteers in their community for over 50 years; and

Whereas Tom was the initiator and is the present chair of the Eastern Passage's local community newspaper The Beacon, was the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Summer Carnival chair for many years, a member of the local Ratepayers Association, worked with youth in developing boxing skills, and co-organized local road races and the local Terry Fox Run with his wife, Pat; and

Whereas this October Tom and Pat Harmes were the recipients of the Eastern Passage/Cow Bay Wall of Recognition for "enriching the lives of others";

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank Tom and Pat Harmes of Eastern Passage for their years of dedication as volunteers in their community, and congratulate them as the latest inductees to the Eastern Passage/Cow Bay Wall of Recognition.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1593

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas participation in a winter sport such as hockey is a wonderful way to stay active, in addition to bringing communities together as spectators for games and tournaments; and

Whereas Queens Place Emera Centre will host the Czech Republic World Junior A hockey team for a two-day training camp beginning November 1st, and the exhibition game against the CIBC Wood Gundy Lumberjacks on November 2, 2012; and

Whereas this exhibition hockey game will bring world-class hockey to Queens County, along with the opportunity to showcase the area to players, spectators, and supporters;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Queens Place Emera Centre and their staff for hosting a training camp and the pre-tournament hockey game between the Czech Republic World Junior A team and the CIBC Wood Gundy Lumberjacks.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 1594

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Staff Sergeant Robert “Bobby” Stewart has served 40 years as a police officer in the Town of Westville; and

Whereas Staff Sergeant Stewart has a sensitivity toward residents and fellow workers, and always does his best to serve and protect; and

Whereas it has been said about Staff Sergeant Stewart that there were very few issues he could not resolve over a cup of tea or coffee;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate and acknowledge the many years of quality service Staff Sergeant Bobby Stewart has provided to the Town of Westville, the County of Pictou and, by extension, the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

RESOLUTION NO. 1595

HON. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medals have been awarded to deserving Nova Scotians for their contributions to our province; and

Whereas Thomas P. Waters of Prospect Bay was recognized for his commitment to veterans and the Royal Canadian Legion; and

Whereas Tom Waters continues to provide exemplary leadership as a tireless advocate for veterans;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Thomas P. Waters on receiving his Diamond Jubilee Medal, with best wishes of good luck in his future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1596

MR. BRIAN SKABAR: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Rafuse family of Amherst, Nova Scotia, has turned their home into the Rafuse Haunted Manor for the fourth year; and

Whereas they invite other families to come to their home to share their love of Halloween and enjoy some friendly and scary frights; and

Whereas the Rafuse family donates the \$2 admission fee to charity;

Therefore be it resolved that the Members of the Legislative Assembly join me in a heartfelt rattling of the chains in appreciation of the work the Rafuse family does to combine their love of Halloween with the support for the charities, the family and the community.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 1597

MR. JIM MORTON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Lunenburg, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Habitat for Humanity is a national, non-profit organization that aims to provide access to safe, decent and affordable housing as a basic human right that should be available to everyone; and

Whereas the South Shore Chapter of Habitat for Humanity is getting ready to build a new dwelling on a piece of land in Mahone Bay that has been donated by the Town of Mahone Bay for development by the group; and

Whereas a final fundraising event, organized in part by Hank Middleton, took place on September 15th with well-known local musical acts performing at the Mug and Anchor, to raise both funds and awareness of the build taking place on Fauxburg Road;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly commend Hank Middleton and all volunteers with the South Shore Chapter of Habitat for Humanity for their fundraising efforts and their commitment to the provision of affordable housing for all.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 3:37 p.m. and end at 5:07 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

FISH. & AQUACULTURE: CORNWALLIS PARK LEASE - DETAILS

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, on Monday night of this week, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environment was asked to release details of a lease agreement that was signed between his department and the Cornwallis Park Development Association. On Monday night the minister said he was unable or unwilling to release the details of that arrangement. Yesterday the Premier said he would disclose the details of that lease, so my question to the Premier is, when can we expect to see the details of that lease?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned to the press outside just a short time ago, I think there is a fair amount of misinformation about this that has been, for some reason, either by way of rumour or inquiry more than anything else, which is this - there is an agreement to lease. There is not a lease in place at this time. I have asked for that file to come back to our office for review. I know there had been questions about it. I have similar kinds of questions but I think, as I've said, at this point it is a subject of speculation. I want to see what's actually in it and make sure all the information is properly released, when it can all be released at once.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, details of this lease are finding their way out through different sources from the community and, quite frankly, here in Halifax. The property in question that the government has leased just recently sold to the Cornwallis Park Development Association for \$162,000. On Monday night, the minister told the media and all members who were there that the lease arrangement is for \$287,000 per year. My question to the Premier is, how can signing a lease for \$287,000 for 10 years, almost \$3 million from the taxpayers of Nova Scotia, to lease a building from an organization that just paid \$162,000 is a good deal for today's families?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the kind of misinformation that we're talking about. The reality is that there is an amalgamation of a number of departments going in. It's not just a building, there are garage facilities, a helipad; there is a whole lot of other land that is included in that lease arrangement. It also includes somewhere between \$850,000 and \$1 million worth of fit-up costs that are associated with the lease. I think what we need to do, certainly, and as I said, we're certainly willing to release all of this information, at an appropriate time, once we've had an opportunity to bring it all together, because we here, I think, as all Nova Scotians do, want to make sure that this is the right arrangement for that community and the right arrangement for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

MR. MCNEIL: The Premier said he didn't know much about the lease, about the arrangements that were made and now he is rhyming off a number of scenarios, Mr. Speaker. The Premier knows full well the full details around this arrangement and what he knows now though is that the media and this caucus has caught the fact that this government has signed a lease that is unacceptable to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

This is the same government that gave away \$590 million to six companies that laid off 13,010 Nova Scotians. This is the same Premier that stood in this House yesterday and said that the Nalcor deal was a great deal for Nova Scotians, yet he can't tell us how much it costs, he can't tell us what it means to power bills across Nova Scotia. This is the same Premier that is standing before us now, telling us it's a good idea for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to lease a building for \$3 million that was just paid \$162 million - \$162,000. So my question to the Premier is, is it his government's inexperience or are they just not up to the task of governing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the Leader of the Official Opposition. He said it was \$162 million, I don't know where he got that figure from. That is obviously incorrect but if there is inexperience, it would certainly be in the caucus of the Liberal Party in not understanding the way in which leases are arranged. They include not just the purchase price but they include a whole suite of improvements that have to be done.

You know Mr. Speaker, I think it's a little bit ironic that it is this Party that is making this kind of allegation and I want to table for you, if I might get the attention of the Page, this is the news story about the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia that signed a deal that included 20 years of locking the Province of Nova Scotia in on the Sable offshore royalty deal the day they were defeated. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

FISH. & AQUACULTURE - ANNA. CO. LEASE: COST - APPROPRIATENESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Staying in the same vein, my question is to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. As reported in allnovascotia.com, the NDP agreed to spend \$133,500 per year to lease an Annapolis County building that sold last week for \$162,500. This group will make \$1.1 million off their investment from this government's lease. Mr. Speaker, that is a return of 721 per cent. That is a return that's even better than Nova Scotia Power shareholders get. All expenses included, the rent comes to about \$289,000 per year. So my question to the minister is, what precautions were taken to make sure that taxpayers were not paying more than they should for this space?

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I defer the question to the Premier.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the minister for allowing the opportunity to deal with the question because, first of all, I think it's an important one. One of the things that we want to ensure is that the people of the province always get the best value for their money and in this case, Mr. Speaker, what you have is a non-profit community development organization, one that runs services for those communities, including cadets and other organizations. The lease arrangement with them is based on a good-value business case and the idea is that the lease would include all the facilities, the garage, the helipad, and it would include, as I said earlier, almost \$850,000 to \$1 million in fit-up costs. So what we're doing, what I've asked to be done, is to have that file sent back for review so that we can make sure the business case was set out properly and that it accomplishes its aims. The aim here, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that good jobs end up in rural Nova Scotia and that we assist communities in rural Nova Scotia that need assistance.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: We all agree that moving departments to rural areas is a good idea. The Premier said yesterday that it would be - actually, as of yesterday he said that the move would be cost-neutral, but of course this government has shown no proof of that. Now it sounds like the Premier has it on hold as he reviews it. Yesterday the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture said we think it's a fair market value. A way of determining fair market value is to tender the space, but this government thinks that they know better than anyone else.

So my question is to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, it was his file, was moving the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture employees an emergency, such as the

emergency used to bypass the tendering process for the Ships Start Here PR campaign? Or what other excuse does the minister have for not making sure that he was getting the best possible price for taxpayers?

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, again, I defer the question to the Premier of Nova Scotia.

THE PREMIER: Thank you again. I would like to thank the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for allowing me an opportunity to answer the question. The reality is that we're dealing with a co-operative, or a not-for-profit organization. As the member opposite knows, there are specific procurement rules that were followed by the government when dealing with not-for-profits. I hope he would know that, because this is something that the former Progressive Conservative Government did - I think four times.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the NDP refused to say on Monday just how much they would spend on this 10-year lease. Then on Tuesday they dragged their feet, releasing the information after repeated inquiries. Now, when the information seems to be available to the media, the Premier all of a sudden takes some interest in this and takes it away from his Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, being the good principal of that school of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the question I'll try to ask is very simple; will the Premier release all documentation, including how the decision was made to select this site in Cornwallis at such a high cost, or will he continue to hide the information from taxpayers? When will he tell taxpayers just how much he's spending of their money?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. It's an open and transparent process. It's being dealt with. I don't know what the Opposition has or why they think that a community development organization somehow is an illicit organization to try to deal with. I mean, we are working with a community group to ensure that departments get the best possible place for them to be able to deliver those services. So we have no problem with the release of the information. I said we're going to review the file, and once we've finished reviewing the file, we will release the information.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

FISH. & AQUACULTURE - LEASE ARRANGEMENT: TIR MIN. - ROLE

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, on Monday night the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture said that they would not be releasing the details in and around this lease. For the last two days the Premier has said that he would be releasing that information. Now he needs to review it.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Could the minister tell us what role his department played in this lease?

HON. MAURICE SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. As the member would know, I don't personally get involved in each lease arrangement, but I can tell you that my staff were in the area looking at what was available. This was a property that was looked at and considered to be apt.

There are a number of considerations when you're looking at a property. One of them is, who's going to use it? In this case, we're amalgamating three separate departments in one area. That means that we're going to save up to \$1.5 or \$1.6 million on renovating the DNR facilities. So that was part of the mix as well.

At this particular stage my position is that we've looked at these things and we are comfortable with the position we've taken on looking at this space.

I should point out - and I'm very pleased that the Premier has indicated to me that he wants to look at the file as well, because for me I think that's an important thing. I always welcome someone coming and reviewing the work that we do at the department and particularly when it's the Premier - it gives me great confidence that he is going to do that. So, thank you for that question.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that. First of all, the minister mentioned that a number of his staff had gone down to review other properties in the area, to look at other buildings. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to make that information available to this House, what other buildings they looked at. Quite frankly, the Premier has said there was no tender; it's an untendered agreement that was made with a non-profit organization in the Cornwallis area.

Furthermore to the minister, you're comfortable with this deal - if you're so comfortable with this deal, why are we putting the brakes on it today?

MR. SMITH: First of all I want to say, to me this is a very good news story - we're bringing jobs from Halifax and we're moving them into rural communities. I should say that the member opposite who asked the question will be benefiting because a lot of these jobs, if it comes to Cornwallis, will be in his riding.

Is the member opposite saying that he is not (Interruptions) Well, again, there's no lease signed, you've been told that by the Premier. There's no lease signed. The document we have signed gives us the right to review the lease, and the Premier, using his prerogative, has said that's what he wants to do, so that's what we will do.

Again, this is a positive news story for Nova Scotia. We're taking (Applause) The Third Party had an opportunity to move jobs to rural Nova Scotia; they didn't take it. Is the member opposite suggesting that he doesn't want jobs in rural Nova Scotia?

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, it's a job at any cost, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is suggesting that it is okay that his department signs an agreement for \$3 million on a property that sold a few days ago for \$162,000. This is at a time when they're closing emergency rooms across the province, this is at a time when they're taking \$65 million out of public education for our children, and the minister stands up and suggests that people are against jobs in rural Nova Scotia because they dare question the fact that his department is spending \$3 million to lease a property that was sold for \$162,000.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, the Premier has now become involved in this. I want to ask the minister, who in his department authorized the signing of this agreement - in his department?

MR. SMITH: Well again, as long as the member opposite recognizes that this is not a lease that has been signed, that it is an agreement to enter into a lease and we have the opportunity to review this, and that's what we intend to do. My understanding, and I don't have the name of the person who signs the document - there are 2,200 people working at TIR and I haven't had an opportunity to meet all of them - I don't know. I certainly didn't sign a lease, so I know that hasn't happened yet, and it would be up to me to sign it. So if you need the name of the person who actually did that, I'll get that for you, that shouldn't be a difficulty.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**PREM. - PART-TIME JOB/FULL-TIME JOB:
COMPARABLE SECURITY - CONFIRM**

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, October 25th the Premier stood in this House and said that employment is up and unemployment is down. In the last year Nova Scotia has shed 8,600 full-time jobs. They've added 13,500 part-time jobs in that same period. The unemployment rate is down because this Premier and this government are creating a race to the bottom and forcing Nova Scotians into part-time employment. This is an accomplishment that the Premier is boasting about.

My question to the Premier is, does the Premier really believe that someone working a part-time job is really as well off as someone in a full-time job, or is it just his inexperience?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think if the Leader of the Opposition had a little experience reading stats, maybe he would get them right. The simple fact of the matter is that the amount of employment in Nova Scotia since June 2009 is up 8,800 jobs. The participation rate is up and the employment rate is up. Those are all good things for the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. MCNEIL: The Premier celebrates these so-called economic victories, but Nova Scotians aren't celebrating. This government's economic development policies are placing our province in a race to the bottom, and Nova Scotians are suffering. In December 2008, there were 39,800 unemployed Nova Scotians. That was in the middle of the recession. Today there are 43,400 unemployed Nova Scotians under this NDP Government.

My question to the Premier is, with more unemployed Nova Scotians now than during the recession, why is the Premier celebrating his so-called economic victories, or is it just his inexperience?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's laughable. You've got a guy over there, Leader of the Official Opposition, who had to hire a consultant to figure out how to operate his own office - the biggest budget he's ever had to manage. The simple fact of the matter is that the whole world has gone through recessionary (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that the whole world is going through recessionary pressures. You see what's happening in the United States. You see the sovereign debt crisis in Europe. In fact, what is happening here in Nova Scotia for most people - what they see is progress being made in their economy. Since June 2009, what we've seen is a steady string of announcements around new jobs that are coming into the province. We've won the largest industrial contract in the history of our province, and even now you see Statistics Canada reporting that there are 8,800 more jobs in the province than there were when we came to power.

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, in his first answer he was celebrating all of the good things going on in the economy of Nova Scotia. In his second answer he was blaming all of the bad things going on in the economy of Nova Scotia on someone else.

Yesterday the Premier said, "Job growth is going in the right direction." So the Premier is content with more part-time work, more low-paid work, and fewer full-time jobs. The Premier seems pleased that he watched six corporations lay off more than 1,300 Nova Scotians after taking \$590 million out of the pockets of the taxpayers of Nova Scotia, with the help of our Premier. Nova Scotians are working twice as hard because this government has a habit of writing big cheques to big business, and the Premier seems to be content with Nova Scotians being laid off.

My question to the Premier is, why is this government forcing Nova Scotians into part-time work, and why does the Premier think that's going in the right direction?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Leader of the Official Opposition really thinks that what he's saying is believed by anyone, because it's not - maybe by the few people who sit behind him. The reality is that there was \$300 million invested in order to win 10,000 jobs, a commercial loan, advanced at a commercial rate that can only be forgiven if they actually hit the job targets.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, that will generate more than \$2 billion in tax revenues. If the Leader of the Official Opposition can't see the virtue of that equation, then that is inexperience writ large.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

PREM. - LBR. LAWS/UNION DRIVES: HOCKEY PLAYERS - EFFECTS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, speaking of jobs, under the NDP, Nova Scotia has become an expensive national playground for those who are seeking to set new precedents in our country under their new labour laws, like first contract arbitration. Yesterday, we learned that even our amateur hockey players are not safe from this new trend, as we learned that the Cape Breton Screaming Eagles have received an application from a national union to organize, and I will table the statement from the Screaming Eagles when they indicate that they received an application from the Canadian Hockey League Players' Association, seeking to certify our children amateur hockey players under their union. I will table that for the benefit of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that it is the fans, the hockey families and the fans of Nova Scotia who will pay the price for this expensive new national playground that the NDP has set up for union drives. My question to the Premier is, will he now concede that he has created an expensive national playground for new union drives and it's hockey families that are going to end up paying the price?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I always love when the contrast between the Opposition Parties is so distinct. Just not more than 30 seconds ago I was the friend of big business and now I'm the friend of big labour. The truth of the matter is we are just the champions of the people - that's the only people we work for.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party would have a look at the actual facts and he would discover that the organizing drive for the CHLPA actually began in Alberta, that bastion of union democracy.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may be wondering who his friends are, but I can assure this House he is certainly not a friend of the thousands of Nova Scotians

who are out looking for work, who don't get a bailout from his government but do get a hockey stick in the rear-end when they're faced with these kinds of pro-union labour laws but in case the government doesn't think this is a serious issue, in case the Premier doesn't think this is a serious issue, it's not only about hockey, it's not only about the expense that our hockey fans will have to take, it is actually about all of those companies out there seeking to employ a few Nova Scotians here, because they, too, are under the gun.

Companies like Egg Films, for example, a Nova Scotia success story, a small business treating their employees well, who themselves were subject to a national union, in this case the IATSE Union, coming to town because they believe Nova Scotia is now the place to go if you want to attack companies like Egg Films. In fact, their president, Sarah Thomas says that this national union "bullied its way into representing some casual . . . workers who sometimes work on commercials 10 or 15 days a year" for her company in order to set a new national precedent. I will table the remarks of Sara Thomas of Egg Films.

MR. SPEAKER: A minute and a half.

MR. BAILLIE: So my question to the Premier is, with hundreds of small business leaders like Sara Thomas speaking up in defence of good jobs in Nova Scotia, while the Premier goes on with his own expensive playground agenda, what does he say to those small business employers trying to hire a few of their fellow Nova Scotians when they're faced with this kind of backlash?

THE PREMIER: In response to that question, what I say is if you're going to play hockey, wear a helmet.

Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that none of these - the CHLPA is a question of certification; it's not a question of contract. I think even those people who understand nothing about labour law could at least understand that.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, if the Premier wanted to give a complete and accurate answer to that last question, what he could have said is if you want to come to Nova Scotia, invest in our province, and hire a few of our people, get a lawyer - because that's what companies like Egg Films are facing, that's what hockey clubs like the Cape Breton Screaming Eagles and the Halifax Mooseheads are facing. What a shame, what a loss of investment and opportunity for our fellow Nova Scotians because he is determined to force through first contract arbitration and let Nova Scotia be the breeding ground for these kinds of anti-job actions.

I will ask the Premier at this time, when there are Nova Scotia families who are turning to food banks, working Nova Scotians who can't make enough, that they need to go to food banks, will he explain to them why he is allowing working Nova Scotians to be used as guinea pigs in his national union agenda?

THE PREMIER: I've never heard such a load of nonsense in my life. I have to tell you, this has nothing to do with certification. The legislation that has been introduced had nothing to do with it, it has nothing to do with any of the decisions that he has mentioned. Mr. Speaker, the next thing I know, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is going to be blaming the NHL lockout on me.

What I can tell him about that is that there is a guy from Cole Harbour who is on the NHL bargaining committee, it's just not me. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: AWARENESS - LACK EXPLAIN

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: After that answer, I can hear NHL players rejoicing all across the nation, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier stood in this House and said "we have young people finally able to get jobs in our province." However, one of the hardest-hit segments of our province is our youth. Since the NDP has taken office, young Nova Scotians have seen unemployment levels increasing by almost 20 per cent under his watch.

My question to the Premier is, why didn't the Premier know what the state of the youth employment was in Nova Scotia, or is it just his inexperience?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if you want to see inexperience, what you should do is just look at some of the research that's being done on behalf of the Liberal Party.

The simple fact of the matter is there is an enthusiasm and there is a forward-looking air with young people today in this province. Last night I happened to be over at the FUSION Halifax event where we had young people talking about how great the future looks in Nova Scotia. The fact of the matter is that the students who come to Dalhousie, or to other universities here, many of them are staying, they are choosing to make their life here. They are seeing for the first time, on the horizon, prosperity that we have not seen for 20 years.

MR. MCNEIL: Like John Buchanan is back in town; the offshore is coming someday, Mr. Speaker. If there's a single young Nova Scotian happy about the future, it is they realize there's an election in their future.

The Premier seems to think young Nova Scotians are doing well in an economy that his government has created - none of the data supports his belief. The truth is that since the NDP have taken office young people in Nova Scotia are facing 20 per cent fewer job opportunities. Even more concerning, Mr. Speaker, is the trend of part-time work replacing full-time employment. Nova Scotians between the ages of 20 and 24 years saw a drop in

full-time jobs of 31 per cent, and part-time work increasing by 43 per cent under this NDP Government.

Mr. Speaker, those are exactly the young people who are saddled with tens of thousands of dollars of debt, desperately needing work experience and are making a choice of whether to stay in Nova Scotia or not.

My question to the Premier is, why is this government pursuing an economic race to the bottom that is forcing our sons and daughters to move out West - or is it his inexperience?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I will start by reminding the Leader of the Liberal Party that it was actually a former Liberal Premier who talked about the future of the offshore, not John Buchanan, who held up the vial of oil and talked about the offshore.

The reality of the situation is that we are creating more jobs in this province. In fact, we've created more seats in the community college in order to be able to train more young people so that they will be able to stay in this province, because they're going to have good jobs. Do you know that for the first time there are actually signs up out West advertising for jobs back here in Nova Scotia?

MR. MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, the slogan across communities across this province has been, let's go take a seat at community college, maybe we'll get a part-time job under the NDP Government, because they're perfectly content.

This negative economic environment is not limited to rural Nova Scotia. Halifax is bleeding young people as well. The 2012 Halifax Vital Statistics report shows that in the last decade we have seen the under-15 population drop by more than five times the national average. In that same period, the 30- to 40-year demographic also shrank by 13 per cent. Young people and young families said they are leaving because of poor job prospects.

My question to the Premier is, when will the Premier realize that his bad economic policies are driving people out of this province, or is it just his inexperience?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if you want to see inexperience in action, it's that kind of question. He would know that after 20 years of the worst economic performance in the country under Liberal and Progressive Conservative Governments, we are turning it around. We have a big mess to clean up, but we're doing it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

**ERDT - N.S. ASSOC. OF REG. DEV. AUTHORITIES:
CONFERENCE (2011) - DETAILS**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. For the past four years, including this year, the minister's department has sent to each regional development authority \$125,000 - a total of over \$1 million a year for each of those years. That money is supposed to be used for local regional economic development.

From time to time the Nova Scotia Association of Regional Development Authorities has an annual meeting and a conference. I want to ask the minister where that conference was held last year, in 2011, and whether he attended that conference?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I think - I could be wrong, because I've attended so many things, but I think that might have been in Fox Harbour. Now, don't take that to the bank, because there have been a number of conferences that I attended, but I will check that out for sure. I was there. I've attended a number of conferences by the RDAs.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister I will not be taking Fox Harbour to the bank. However, I will refresh his memory, because indeed the conference was held at Fox Harb'r Golf Resort & Spa, a place that boasts both rich accommodations and warm hospitality, a place - according to its Web site - where you go to discover the joy found in life's finer pleasures. The conference cost taxpayers of this province \$700 for each attendee there, in addition to \$15,000 to pay for CBC's Rex Murphy to be one of the keynote speakers, along with the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

At a time when Nova Scotians are being told to tighten their belts, when the NDP is cutting back in schools and hospitals, I ask the minister, why did the minister endorse such a flagrant abuse of taxpayers' money by agreeing to go and attend such an extravagant conference?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, for the record, I will say and reiterate, I did attend and I didn't charge anything for myself to be there. The decision to have this at Fox Harbour was made by the RDA association, I simply got an invite which I thought, as Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, it was more than appropriate for me to be there and I went.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the point is that that money - the \$1 million his department sends to RDAs - is to be used for regional economic development, not fancy conferences at Fox Harbour. (Interruptions) This is a time when, in the last three years, 6,300 full-time jobs have been lost outside of Halifax. Instead of creating jobs in rural areas, the RDAs, under the supervision of this minister, attended a conference at Fox Harbour, costing \$700 each. Fox Harbour, by the way, whose Web site says that they invite

visitors such as our RDA delegates, such as the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism to, “Savour melt-in-your-mouth Atlantic lobster, flavourful Tatamagouche rack of lamb, superb wines from our exemplary cellar and an array of enticing signature desserts.”

My question for the minister is, will he explain to those many struggling Nova Scotians, those many unemployed Nova Scotians, whether going to Fox Harbour to such a fancy conference is part of his jobsHere strategy?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, what I will do, I’m not going to give any fictional numbers - I’m going to give you facts. It is a fact that, since June 2009 to this date, we created 8,800 jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia. It is a fact that we’ve invested millions in the Irving shipbuilding contract to create billions of dollars for Nova Scotians. That’s a fact. It is a fact that with this investment of millions of dollars in the Irving shipyard building the combat ships, we will create 11,500 jobs at the peak. Those are the facts; that’s not fiction.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

ERDT: DSME TRENTON - EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. I’m glad he’s in the mood to share some facts because we certainly need some on DSME Trenton. This government spent \$60 million for 49 per cent equity stake in DSME. In return, we were promised 500 jobs. As of August 3, 2012, the minister said approximately 66 people were employed at the plant. My question for the minister is, how many people are currently employed at DSME?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, there are, without a doubt, less than 60 people employed at DSME. As I said yesterday, this is a new company for Nova Scotia, that there were some things that happened with respect to a new company that are simply unpredictable, when it comes to the global economy. We are dealing with a company from Korea, so there had to be some cultural adjustments for this company as well.

What I can tell you, and again if we want to deal with facts, is that this company is in the business of planning and marketing itself globally. I have confidence in this company and it will be successful.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, on August 3, 2012, the minister said, “If we foretell the future, and I would think if we knew where the energy market was going when it came to windmills, I’m not sure if DSME would have been talking to us at all.”

During the same post-Cabinet scrum, the minister admitted he did not know which markets DSME had access to. He admits the company is struggling, he admits he doesn’t

know their marketing plan but he still insists he is cautiously optimistic and I'll table those quotes. My question is, will the minister share the organization's business plan that allows him to remain cautiously optimistic after the fact there are 60 people remaining working at DSME in Trenton today?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, what I will table today for the member opposite, who despite my invitations hasn't taken me up on my offer - I will table the jobsHere strategy and I would encourage him to read that.

I will also table - and if I may, Mr. Speaker, I just want to read something very, very recent from the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. In summary, "Overall, as noted earlier, since 2009, the government has generally done a good job acting on the commitments laid out in the 2009 election campaign and should be applauded for their efforts and dedication. It is important to keep in mind that this government came into office after economic challenging times." And there is more. I will table that.

MR. MACLELLAN: The minister's department is responsible for investing taxpayers' dollars to generate employment and help develop economic opportunities in this province. So if the minister wants to meet, what I want to know is if he will be available and willing to tell me how he failed Nova Scotians with \$60 million of their money in Trenton? That's my question for the minister.

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, this government has protected jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia. An example of that would be the 14,000 jobs that we protected in Cape Breton; if we didn't do that, there would be families in this province that would be left out. There would not be 14,000 people employed in that area today. In fact, those people would be looking for jobs in western Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

ERDT: IRVING SHIPBUILDING AGREEMENTS - TRANSPARENCY

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the federal government received a request under the Access to Information Act to make public the umbrella agreement that the federal government signed with the Irving shipyard in Halifax. They agreed to release parts of those agreements. Irving Shipbuilding initially requested the courts stop the release of this information but withdrew the request. Now both the federal government and Irving Shipbuilding are in agreement with that information being made public. Does the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism agree that a key condition to spending public money, or accepting public money, is being open to public scrutiny?

HON. PERCY PARIS: Mr. Speaker, the federal shipbuilding contract is probably the single most important event that has happened in my lifetime. At the peak of it we are going to create 11,500 jobs. We are proud to say, and we will continue to say, the role that

this government had in assisting Irving and securing that contract. Anything that we do, we will not jeopardize the relationship that we have with Irving Shipbuilding. We are proceeding very, very carefully. We are not rushing into this. We are taking our time at it because we want to do it right, not like previous other governments.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the contract was won by Irving Shipbuilding on merit. The competition is over. Details of the umbrella agreement are forthcoming. The federal government is willing to let the public know the facts. Irving Shipbuilding is willing to let the public know the facts. Why is the minister the only person unwilling to tell Nova Scotians the facts behind the \$304 million that it gave to Irving Shipbuilding, most of which will never be repaid to the taxpayers.

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, once again the Irving Shipbuilding got that contract with the help of the Province of Nova Scotia. If it hadn't been - and Mr. Irving said this himself - if it hadn't been for the Province of Nova Scotia, he said we would never have won that contract.

Mr. Speaker, we are at the table with Irving and we are creating jobs for Nova Scotians, 11,500 jobs at the peak.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister allowed \$260 million alone, he approved, for Irving Shipbuilding, to be forgivable - a giveaway, a handout - costing every Nova Scotian \$325 per person. What is the minister hiding and why is the minister and the NDP Government the only ones keeping secrets now?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, we have invested millions of dollars in that Irving bid. We've invested millions and we're going to get billions back. We will earn \$2.8 billion, giving us more money to invest in health care, to invest in education for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, this is an investment. Part of the money that we've invested in Irving will earn forgiveness based on milestones reached in terms of jobs. This is a wise investment, a 6 per cent investment, \$2.8 billion. They don't want that for Nova Scotians but I can tell you this government wants it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PREM. - EDUC. INVESTMENTS: RETURN RATE - CONSIDERATION

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the OECD calculates the rate of return on investing in education at roughly 9 per cent. This is an impressive return for any investment. Given this NDP Government's insistence on cutting education funding, it would seem that this government sees post-secondary education funding as a burden, rather than an investment, which is completely backwards.

Will the Premier tell the members of this House whether he, the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education considered the rate of return on education investments before it slashed \$100 million from our universities?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to just correct the member opposite. When we came into government, there was a fund of money that was the result of a trust that was set up between the federal and provincial governments. It provided every year for the reduction of tuition in the province. In fact, the year we came in, that came to an end by the feds. The federal government has not replenished that fund.

That meant that before we even looked at things like the inflationary costs that are associated with maintaining universities, salary increases, all of that - the first thing we had to do was backfill some \$30 million associated with that. Had we not done that, the cost of tuition in this province would have gone up by 20 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, what we did do was make sure that the students were shielded from those increases and they had to make some modest contribution towards the inflationary costs associated with it. That's what we did - we helped protect students from the real costs associated with the end of federal funding.

MR. CHURCHILL: This is what this Premier does - he stands up and blames everybody else for decisions that he has made. (Interruptions) This Premier cut \$100 million out of our post-secondary education system. He says we didn't have money to put into it. Well where did they get the \$600 million to give to six corporations in this province? They have \$600 million for six corporations that laid off 1,300 people, but didn't have \$100 million to invest in our education system, and the province is going to hurt.

Universities inject \$805.2 million into Nova Scotia's economy every year. Universities are an economic driver for the province and are responsible annually for about \$968 million in gross domestic product, \$227 million in tax revenue and \$4.39 billion in economic output. Unfortunately this Premier doesn't care about any of that and chooses to cut education instead.

My question to the Premier is, students and universities are wondering why the Premier has endless amounts of cash for corporations. (Interruption) The Deputy Premier might find this funny but I assure him students and their families don't. Why did he find all this money for six corporations but had to cut \$100 million out of our universities?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you know, I think the first thing that the member for Yarmouth ought to do is maybe get a math lesson. The simple fact of the matter is that not only did we backfill the \$30 million - we're not blaming the federal government, it's just a fact. We're just acknowledging the fact that the first thing we had to do was backfill all of that.

Then we brought forward the graduate retention tax rebate, Mr. Speaker, in order to make sure that young people who were graduating had incentives to stay in the province. Then we brought in a debt cap that ensured students in our province would not continue to have excessive debts. The reality of the situation in this province is that this government, the men and women who make up this caucus, have invested more money in students and student assistance than any government in the history of the province, with the exception of the advent of the student loans program.

MR. CHURCHILL: This is what we risk by cutting our education system, Mr. Speaker, a Premier who doesn't know how to do math. We have cut \$100 million out of our education system. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives lists Nova Scotia as the least affordable jurisdiction for post-secondary education and yet we have a Premier who stands up and brags about all the great things he's doing for our universities.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stand in this House today and tell the very students who supported him while in Opposition that his government will stand up for students, reverse his funding cuts to universities, and deny any tuition increases coming out of the review?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I already pointed out - and there's a big difference between student assistance on the one hand and making sure that people have access to university and the question of tuition. People often equate them but they are not the same. The simple fact of the matter is that we have made sure that assistance to students has continued to grow so that more young people will be able to take advantage of the great universities that we have here in our province.

We want to ensure that if you have the capacity, the ability not only to go to university but to go to community college, so we increased the number of seats in community college so that young people will have access to trades. And, yes, we invested money in things like the largest industrial shipbuilding contract in our history so that when these people graduate, when the engineering class graduates, they will have jobs; when the sheet metal workers class graduates, they will have jobs; when the plumbers graduate, they will have jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we care about the young people of this province and we want to make sure that they have the education they need and they get the jobs they deserve.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

PREM. - LAW AMENDMENTS COMM: COMMUNITIES - VISITATION

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians in communities throughout our province are upset at the Premier's interference in the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The Premier and the NDP Government ordered the commission

to eliminate the protected ridings of Clare, Argyle, Preston and Richmond. One of the casualties of the Premier's interference has been the riding of Shelburne. The Premier feels that the residents of Shelburne were not heard by the commission and, therefore, has decided that the Law Amendments Committee will meet in Shelburne.

Could the Premier advise the House today, and all Nova Scotians, what other Nova Scotia communities negatively impacted by the Electoral Boundaries Commission's report will be visited by the Law Amendments Committee?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Electoral Boundaries Commission's report - in fact, they went to those communities and in many of them they met with the residents who were there. They met with the terms of reference that was decided by the House of Assembly and they produced a report, as I pointed out, that did not address the position in Shelburne. So we think it's only fair that they have a voice. The fact of the matter is that other places have had an opportunity to give input.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, October 28th, I attended a meeting in Havre Boucher where residents gathered to express their dissatisfaction with the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission that would put Antigonish County residents east of the Tracadie River in the new riding of East Nova. Councillors and residents felt they did not have the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction, as the revised interim report recommended keeping Antigonish County as a stand-alone riding.

In today's issue of the Port Hawkesbury Reporter, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is quoted - with the heading: He urged those in attendance to keep up the pressure to save the current Antigonish riding - "Write the Premier, get on the telephone and call people." said the minister, who also urged residents to sign a petition made available by municipal councillors at the meeting. "Let's try and stop this in some way. The only way you're going to do this is to make your voices heard."

So my question is - since the Premier is sending the Committee on Law Amendments to the riding of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environment in Shelburne - will he also send the Committee on Law Amendments to Havre Boucher in the riding of his Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I'd like to do is congratulate the minister on the representation of his riding. Obviously he was doing his job in encouraging them to get out and to make representations. The Committee on Law Amendments is here; it is open to anyone who wants to come and state their opinion with respect to these proceedings. Of course the decision to travel will ultimately be the decision of the committee. I have to say I think that some of the people, as I understand it, who actually attended that meeting, were at some of the meetings by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Again, we certainly invite them to attend the committee meetings.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I as well will commend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Like myself, he actually went in front of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to represent his constituents, unlike the minister from Shelburne who, at the time, did not make any representations and, based on today it would appear that he's in time out today, as well, and unable to speak on behalf of the people for Shelburne.

The residents of Havre Boucher are saying they felt they did not have the opportunity to be able to express concerns over the proposed change based on what was on the revised report. The Premier is now telling us it's up to the committee. He knows full well that it's his government that decided the Committee on Law Amendments would go down to Shelburne. The committee did not meet; it was not asked - nor was there an opportunity for us to make representation on behalf of people such as those from Havre Boucher.

So I would ask the Premier, in light of all of this, in light of the statements made previously by his Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environment before his time out, will the Premier advise Nova Scotians today that on this very issue, will he allow his backbenchers and his ministers to have a free vote when this bill comes for final consideration? (Applause)

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there is an independent report that is before the House. We're going to have an opportunity, and are having an opportunity, to debate it fully. I look forward to all of that debate. I believe the member for Shelburne had an opportunity to already speak with respect to the legislation. The simple fact of the matter is it's about the democracy that we operate in, and that's why it is necessary for the Electoral Boundaries Commission to adhere to the terms of reference and that's why it is incumbent upon us to make sure that we consider that whole report very seriously, and we also consider when the Boundaries Commission did not have an opportunity to hear from people like in Shelburne, that they have an opportunity to have their voice heard.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - FRONT-LINE HEALTH CARE: AUDITORS - EFFECT

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last Thursday, just prior to all of the flurry that surrounds opening day at the Legislature, the minister sent out a press release that his government plans to hire seven auditors who will in turn support other auditors in the districts. According to the release, the hiring of seven auditors will ensure we receive better front-line health care. Can the minister please tell the House how the hiring of seven auditors will provide better front-line health care?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it's extremely important that Nova Scotians recognize that we need to ensure that the money they provide government is spent in the most appropriate way. We spend \$3.8 billion on the health care budget. I think Nova Scotians would appreciate that an audit is done with the district health authorities across this province. (Applause)

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we had two regional hospitals in the last few weeks that could no longer take patients due to overcrowding. We've seen patients continuing to flood to emergency departments because they don't have access to a family doctor; Collaborative Emergency Centres that were to be the solution to keep ERs open 24/7 are experiencing closures, not to mention those ERs that are still experiencing closures on a regular basis. Yes, indeed, front-line health workers have lost their jobs under this government, despite what the minister might say.

Please tell Nova Scotians, how can this government justify the hiring of seven internal auditors when clearly front-line health care is in chaos?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the important thing here is to recognize that the taxpayers of Nova Scotia fund the health care system here in Nova Scotia. Ensuring that the \$3.8 billion is spent appropriately, and that most, if not all, of that money goes to ensuring services for Nova Scotians across Nova Scotia is the key and is extremely important. We're showing leadership by ensuring that audits are done and that the money we spend here in Nova Scotia on health care is spent in the most appropriate way.

We recognize that services across the province have to be adequate. That's why we have plans, unlike former governments that just did things the way they did for years and years - Liberal Governments, Progressive Conservative Governments.

We have a plan, Mr. Speaker. That is Better Care Sooner, and it's going to address the health care needs of Nova Scotians.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure those who are on long wait lists today are happy about \$3 million going down to Cornwallis. I think you'll see something very different.

Last week a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Wellness told media that the cost of the hiring of an additional seven auditors is close to \$0.75 million and that the money was found in the health budgets to fund the expenditure. Mr. Speaker, this is \$0.75 million that will be coming out of the health care system each and every year, which will be added to an additional internal audit function that already exists in nine districts.

Can the minister please tell us how he does not see this as a duplication of financial administration?

MR. WILSON: One of the things that we take very seriously in the Department of Health and Wellness is the audits that the Auditor General does. One of the things we recognize is implementing and responding to the recommendations of the Auditor General, and this is responding to a direct recommendation from the Auditor General. It's important that Nova Scotians recognize that the government continues to invest in not only front-line health care but in home care, in long-term care. That's why I'm glad to spend an additional \$22 million this year on home care support, so that seniors living in their homes across Nova Scotia, especially in rural communities, get the service they need.

As I said in my previous answer, this government has a plan and we're not going to do things the way the former governments - the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives - did for years and years. They had no plan. They just spent money everywhere they thought they needed it.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. It's called Better Care Sooner. Nova Scotians will recognize the work we're doing when it comes to health care service in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West on a new question.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - MEDIBUS: MIN. - AWARENESS

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I think this next question will tell us exactly how well the former Minister of Health did and what is continuing.

While many patients struggle to access health care services, there appears to be a company that is about to embark upon filling the gaps. MediBus is planning to start with four vehicles on the road in November and will have eight units on the road within eight months. The first four months these units will operate in HRM and Lunenburg County and in Yarmouth, Digby, and Annapolis areas. This service is intended to provide both insured and non-insured health care services in a mobile setting throughout Nova Scotia.

My question to the minister is, is the minister aware that MediBus will soon be providing mobile health services in Nova Scotia?

HON. DAVID WILSON: No, I am not, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GLAVINE: Well, I guess perhaps I should start off then, Mr. Speaker, with tabling the MediBus plan for the province. No one is questioning the delivery of mobile health care services; in fact, it has worked in this province in the form of the mobile breast screening started under a Liberal Government, which unfortunately has become significantly reduced under an NDP Government.

The fundamental question is, who will be paying for the insured services? Will patients who access publicly-funded health care services through MediBus pay for services

that are already provided elsewhere, the public health system, free of charge, thus creating a two-tiered system? Could the minister please outline all of the funding his government has provided, or intends to provide, the MediBus for the delivery of mobile health care services, including whether the government plans to cover the cost of those insured services the company intends to deliver?

MR. WILSON: The one thing I can say to the member opposite is that the NDP and an NDP Government recognize the importance of a single-tier, publicly-funded Medicare system, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going to waver from that. We continue to invest in the publicly-funded system here in Nova Scotia and we recognize that Nova Scotians want us to ensure they have services provided to them. We're going to continue to do that and I can guarantee the member opposite that the single-tier, publicly-funded Medicare system will be well protected in Nova Scotia.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, accessing health care services has been a frustrating proposition for Nova Scotians. There is indeed a gap - a gap that is growing and would appear that in the absence of any government action, a company has recognized this fact and is about to address these gaps by providing medical services that are both insured and non-insured. My question to the minister is, who will be responsible for monitoring the quality and standards of health care services provided by MediBus?

MR. WILSON: That really is at the essence of the publicly-funded health care system. We need to ensure that Nova Scotians receive the proper care in the communities that they receive that in, Mr. Speaker. I can't predict when, but I know - and it's no secret that we've asked for consultation, went out and got consultation around the health insurance Act and I look forward to the member opposite, when I do introduce that piece of legislation, to fully support it because it will protect a publicly-funded, one-tier Medicare system here in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - TALBOT HOUSE: RFP - TREATMENT METHODS

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. As the minister is aware, the request for proposals for a recovery house in Cape Breton closed recently and Talbot House in Frenchvale was the sole applicant. Now the board of Talbot House was reluctant at first to submit an application based on the government's requirement that any new recovery house use methadone. The minister must be aware that this is going against the philosophy of Talbot House, which was the last remaining recovery house in the province to not use methadone treatment. My question through you to the minister is, is the minister going to insist that methadone be part of whether or not Talbot House is successful, or will he give Talbot House the freedom to use their own method of treatment?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, no question, recovery houses play an important role in helping men and women across our province deal with addictions. They play an important role and they are one of many services in a suite of services here in Nova Scotia that support and, hopefully, treat addictions and addiction services here in Nova Scotia.

I said it recently with the recovery houses coming under the Department of Health and Wellness that it's business as usual. I have had the opportunity already to tour one of the recovery houses over in Dartmouth, Freedom Foundation. I was well received there, and they do some amazing work. I've met with some of the residents who live there and they recognize the important work that they do, and I recognize the important work that recovery houses do here in Nova Scotia and what they provide the men and women here in Nova Scotia.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is, Talbot House worked. Without it, too many families have suffered unfairly. Addiction is a serious problem in this province and we can't afford to go without Talbot House any longer. It would be a shame if the minister held the requirement to provide methadone above the need for a recovery house. My question to the minister is, would the minister rather see Nova Scotia go without this vital resource that allowed Talbot House to go forward with their tested and true treatment philosophy?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, as a former health care worker, I recognize that there are different ways to treat people here in Nova Scotia; I recognize that and I keep that at heart. We recognize the importance of recovery houses, that's why we had the RFP extended, that was just closed last week. The Department of Health and Wellness staff are going to do their due diligence in reviewing the RFP and the submissions under the RFP, and we look forward to making a decision quite soon.

MR. BAIN: Mr. Speaker, Cape Breton has been without a recovery house for nearly eight months. Through the reckless actions of the Minister of Community Services, they closed their doors and many Nova Scotian families were unable to get accessible treatment for their loved ones. Talbot House's 17-bed facility was successful in changing the lives of men with addictions for more than 50 years. It was effective, trusted and respected. The minister said a review would be complete by the end of the year, so my question to the minister is, with only one RFP submitted and the fact that Cape Breton has been without a recovery house for months, will the minister guarantee to open a recovery house in Cape Breton as soon as possible?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the importance of recovery houses, throughout the province and the one that was in Cape Breton, we recognize the importance of that. We know that there are addiction services being provided in Cape Breton currently, and as I said to the member earlier, we're reviewing the RFP process. We're going to make a decision and we want to make the right decision to ensure that we can continue to meet

the needs of Nova Scotians, especially the needs of men and women in Cape Breton who find themselves struggling with an addiction. I look forward to that process and I look forward to an announcement soon - hopefully by the end of the year - on this decision, so we can provide services in Cape Breton as well as the rest of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - ER ACCOUNTABILITY REPT.:
TABLING - DETAILS**

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, on November 5, 2009, Bill No. 52 was given Royal Assent in this Legislature. At that time, government indicated the bill would provide public accountability to communities and ministerial accountability for emergency departments. Given that legislation points to the fact that a report needs to be tabled annually, I'm not sure whether to ask the former minister or the current, but we'll go with the current. What has prevented the minister from tabling the Emergency Room Accountability Report, as is mandated by law?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to first commend the former Minister of Health and Wellness here in Nova Scotia. She has worked extremely hard with the staff, within the department, to ensure that we change how health care is delivered in Nova Scotia, how we changed the government to be more accountable and transparent when it comes to health care here in Nova Scotia. I want to commend the former Minister of Health and Wellness and we're going to continue to work with our department and all district health authorities and health clinicians across the province to be transparent and accountable. (Applause)

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I don't think this is going to be a good report. The last Emergency Room Accountability Report was tabled on May 19, 2011, 531 days ago today. We now have waited 531 days for this government to, once again, be accountable to the public as to their success in ensuring all ERs are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As if it isn't bad enough Nova Scotians have to wait to access health care services, now they also have to wait for this government to be accountable. Could the minister outline the specific reasons as to why there has been such a delay in the release of the Emergency Room Accountability Report?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I said earlier in a response from a previous question, the one thing that we recognized here in Nova Scotia when we came to government in 2009, was that we had to do things differently, especially in health care, and we're doing things differently. We're not doing it the Liberal way - cutting and slashing, firing doctors and nurses. We're not doing it the Progressive Conservative way, when you just stick your head in the sand and ignore all the issues.

We've come up with a plan. It's called Better Care Sooner. We've come up with a plan to address emergency room closures, like Collaborative Emergency Centres - something that my colleagues across the country are looking at and adopting, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

MR. GLAVINE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think if we gave scrutiny to the system we'd find many, many gaps and holes, like 5,000 patients without a doctor in Shelburne, one doctor left in Digby, and on we can go.

We are simply asking for this government to be accountable, like they said they would. It's no big secret that in numerous communities across this province they experienced emergency room closures last year. Many of these same communities are still experiencing emergency room closures today, despite what government promised. Could the minister please tell us when the Emergency Room Accountability Report will be tabled?

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, no question - there continue to be issues within the health care system. We recognize that, but the one thing we are sure of is that we're responding to those issues. That's why I was glad to announce today welcoming new doctors to Nova Scotia under the CAPP, all of them practising in rural communities. That's why I was glad to go meet five new residency doctors down in the Valley - down where the member's riding is - who are doing a new program under the residency program here in Nova Scotia. All five of them took their training outside Nova Scotia. Four of them are from Nova Scotia, but I've got to say the most exciting one that I talked to was the lady from Ontario, who's from Ottawa and who loves the Valley. She said to me about a month after the program that she is staying here in Nova Scotia.

We recognize there are still issues within the health care system. We're coming forward with a plan, and we're implementing that plan. You don't have to go far. You can ask the member from Tatamagouche how well the CEC is being accepted in Tatamagouche. You can ask the Leader of the Third Party about how the residents of Parrsboro like the CEC of Parrsboro. That's all I need to reflect, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to work (Interruptions) And Annapolis. The Leader of the Liberal Party can ask the residents from Annapolis how they like the new model. We're going to continue to work on it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

FIN. - SPRING (2013): BALANCED BUDGET - CONFIRM

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the previous Minister of Finance promised a balanced budget in the Spring on numerous occasions. He has now left the new Minister of Finance holding the bag, yet from day one in her new job the current Minister of Finance

has been backing away from that commitment and tentative in her discussions of it. We're heading now to yet another broken promise.

My question for the Minister of Finance is, will the minister deliver a balanced budget in the Spring of 2013?

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I want to take this opportunity to thank the former Minister of Finance for putting us on the right track to a balanced budget.

I have indicated that we have challenges in front of us, without a doubt, because of the magnitude of the mess that we inherited from the Rodney MacDonald Government. I think that's very well understood. However, I'm very pleased to say that we're working hard. We're on track. We're keeping our eye on where it is we want to be. We have a plan, and it is working. I look forward to tabling a budget in the Spring.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are bracing for deeper and deeper cuts to education, health, and social programs. The NDP has already cut \$65 million from education, \$100 million from universities, and more than \$50 million from health care. This minister still has to find a further \$250 million to even approach balance.

Mr. Speaker, the consensus from private sector economists is that the Nova Scotia economy is headed for a downgrade in 2012. That our growth will be just a 1.5 per cent growth rather than the higher amount, at 12 per cent less than the Department of Finance had in their estimates for this year's growth. I can table, actually, the current economic environment document from the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain exactly - with an almost 12 per cent downgrade in the GDP growth estimates - how that will affect her balanced budget promise and how much this NDP Government will have to cut now from education, health and social programs?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member knows full well that this government did not cut \$100 million from universities, for example. We did not cut the amounts of money that they say we cut - \$65 million from education. It's a ridiculous allegation.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the budget numbers, in fact, this government has increased funding in the health care system, every year that we've been in government. We have, without a doubt, a challenge in front of us. We inherited a mess. We're operating in a period of time when the recovery from the recession has been slower than anticipated. We've taken a very balanced approach to this province's finances. We've imposed temporary tax increases. We've brought spending down. We've been able to bring every department's spending in under budget three years in a row.

We're investing in the economy. We're growing jobs. Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier I want on my side when my community is experiencing difficulty; not that guy over there.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is boasting about cutting spending in every department and yet she denies that they've cut \$65 million from education, \$100 million from universities, and on and on. It's one or the other, it can't be both; those are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, education has been gutted. You can ask the NSTU. You can ask the universities themselves. You can talk to the experts in every field and not only have we cut costs and expenditures in all of these departments, the NDP have actually abandoned principles that they once held dear and that must hurt - it must. That's worse.

Mr. Speaker, in the face of all of these cuts and those enormous corporate welfare deals as well, it seems the minister can't keep the balanced budget promise. Since she did not answer the first time, I would like to return to that question and ask the minister - in the face of 8,600 fewer full-time jobs this year and a downgrade from the private sector forecasters of a 12 per cent downgrade in our growth, will the minister tell Nova Scotia if she will keep the government's promise to balance next year's budget?

MS. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the honourable member, what this government will do, in difficult times, to handle this province's finances. It's not what that Party did in difficult times. We will not impose tolls on the highways of this province. We will not bill P3 schools. We will not suspend collective bargaining. We will not send nurses home and pay them to leave the labour force. We will use a balanced approach. We are on track and that's the NDP philosophy. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ERDT - YARMOUTH FERRY: GOV'T. POSITION - REVERSAL EXPLAIN

MR. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, last month the folks in Yarmouth in the tourism industry were encouraged to hear that this government has reversed its longstanding stubborn position on the Yarmouth ferry. We consider that a win for our community home, for the tourism industry in the province, and for this Opposition caucus who has been fighting for that recognition for the last three years. (Applause)

The minister responsible is quoted as saying that they're doing this to revitalize southwestern Nova Scotia, to bring this ferry back. My question to the minister is, what took him so long to see the light?

MR. PARIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that most members, if not all members in this House, will recall when the decision was made about the ferry. We admitted that it was a

tough decision. I can recall many times taking my place in this House and saying to all members of the House that we would love to see a ferry in Yarmouth. That hasn't changed.

I am saying the same things now that I said a year ago, two years ago, and three years ago - we are willing to invest \$21 million over a seven-year period; however, the right conditions have to be in place and part of those right conditions include other partners, other stakeholders to be involved. Those right conditions will be the federal government involvement. Those right conditions will. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for the Oral Question Period has expired.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 103.

Bill No. 103 - Accountability in Economic Development Assistance Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Clayton Park.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and speak on Bill No. 103, which is a bill that was introduced by our leader, Stephen McNeil, the Leader of the Official Opposition. This bill is entitled An Act to Ensure Accountability in Providing Economic Development Assistance in Nova Scotia. This bill speaks directly to the level of largesse that the NDP Government is demonstrating over the last three years with corporate handouts, corporate welfare and corporate giveaways, without the control and without the transparency that would ensure that Nova Scotians know what the deals are, and without knowing that the deals are good for Nova Scotians.

What does the bill ask? I'd like to begin with that before we go through the litany, the long list of government deals that have been cut in the last three years with big business. It's interesting to point out that today the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism brought in a large number of small-business people to talk about their successes. But the hallmark of this government has been giveaways to big business - that's the hallmark, that's the legacy you'll take with you. I know it's a shock to anybody who

supported the NDP that that's the way it's going and people are aghast to see that will be your legacy, your hallmark, your mark in the future. Madam Speaker, it's been a real shock in the last three years.

This bill speaks directly to the problems we've seen with those kinds of corporate deals, the kind of deals that have no guarantees in them, that are forgivable loans, that don't tie the money we give out to job maintenance retention, let alone growth. We've seen money go out to companies, one after the other, where they're decreasing their workforce rather than increasing. We've seen enormously incorrect estimates of jobs that will be created.

Probably the best one is what we heard again today in Question Period, the figure of 10,000 jobs coming from the Irving shipyard project. Irving themselves have less than 2,000 direct jobs, they've said. They're not boasting about five times that, even with the indirect jobs. It's enormously off-base in terms of what we're hearing. Bill No. 103 is designed to specifically provide transparency, openness and accountability in the field of government negotiating with large corporations and making these kinds of very huge commitments that we've been seeing. So what's in the bill?

I would like to just make sure everybody understands what the bill entails. First of all, the bill entails a requirement that the details of all of these deals would be made perfectly open and transparent and made public. So they say that, if you receive public money, then there must be a copy of each of the agreements that are in place and that has to be made public. We know that sometimes those deals will be enormous and very difficult to wade through, very legal in the way they're written, so we're asking in this bill as well that that accountability includes a written summary of the economic development assistance that will be provided, pursuant to the agreement, and that it will also have a written summary and explanation of the terms and conditions of each agreement. There is also supposed to be a document that will identify the business activities to which each agreement relates. So we want clarity about what it is that's expected from the business that's going to get these millions and millions of dollars that come from the pockets of Nova Scotians, that come out of our hard-earned money that we pay.

In Nova Scotia, we pay the highest taxes in the country, but most Nova Scotians could understand that if they're getting value for the money they pay and that's what I hear from the constituents I represent. If they know that we're getting government services, a high quality of health care, good education, reasonable roads to drive on, people are pretty understanding, but they don't like to hear of millions of dollars going out the door in something as nebulous as forgivable loans, something that you can't even put your head around - how you can just forgive these loans. We want to know what the benefits are that are going to come back to Nova Scotia, we want to know the expectations the government has and we want you to make it public and if this bill were to pass, that's exactly what would happen.

We actually put a time frame on it. We say that within 30 days of entering into an agreement, the recipient shall submit to the minister the documents that I already referred to, and within 30 days of any amendment to the agreement, those amendments have to be made public. That will prevent any of the shady dealings that can go on where agreements are changed and things become somewhat different than they were intended and we want to make sure that can't happen. If there are official amendments we want to make sure that they're made public. Again the overriding issue here is transparency and openness and accountability and I can't stress that enough. We need to hear that, we need to see it in writing, we need to have it made public so that any member of the public can look at these arrangements.

We said further, that the recipient shall, on a quarterly basis, so four times a year, give a progress report. What are you doing with that money? If we had such a system in place right now, we'd know what was going on in Trenton with the Daewoo plant, we'd know where the contracts were, whether or not they'd met their requirements. We are three years into that deal, we're past that. It was the first big deal cut by the NDP Government and it was to save jobs and I understand that that is exactly what we want to do, but the jobs haven't been saved. The plant is apparently operating, but we are \$60 million into it as taxpayers.

We can tell you, the Liberal caucus was in New Glasgow in June and there were six cars in the parking lot, six on a workday. That plant is not operating at anywhere near; it's not doing anything, I think that could be maintenance, just a skeleton staff to put the lights on and open the door. It's not operating and the people of Nova Scotia paid \$60 million, through a government arrangement, to be shareholders, to actually have an ownership stake in this company that's doing nothing. If we had an accountability Act like this Bill No. 103 before us, we'd be able to track that, we'd be able to know where we're at, we'd be able to have straightforward answers so that we wouldn't have to be asking the minister and he wouldn't be fishing for the answers about how many people are working there because it would be in the quarterly reports and we'd - all of us - have an up to date accountability of where we're at. Really, it's shameful to go and see that's an organization, a company that we're invested in and that nothing is happening there.

I understand that economies change, and I understand that markets change, but surely there was a business plan before we invested \$60 million. The Premier today was actually making fun of consultants. I think consultants sometimes can help, because they might have told the government, they might have explained to the government or the people making that deal, whether or not there was an adequate business plan. I don't believe that it was properly analyzed. Nothing has materialized around the Daewoo plant in Trenton.

That is just one example of the kind of problems that we've had. We need targets. We need timelines. We need to know that those companies that are going to get our support - and there are many times that might be a good move. If they are getting support, let them

be accountable and let them agree to quarterly reports and progress reports back to the government and back to the House of Assembly. That's what we want to see. We want those documents published so that they are available.

The last point in the bill says that the minister shall publish the documents submitted, and it will be on a public Web site maintained and operated by the province. Madam Speaker, that would mean that anybody in the communities where those projects are taking place, or here in Halifax, wherever it may be, would be able to track the kind of agreements that the government has entered into and whether there is any value for money for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

It really is our biggest concern that we get that value for the taxpayers. It is a difficult time - 8,600 fewer Nova Scotians are working in full-time jobs. I know that the stats show an increase in part-time work, but that might not even be individual jobs, because a lot - it's probably individual jobs, but it might be one person doing two or three part-time jobs. I'm sure every member of this Legislature knows of Nova Scotians who are doing exactly that to keep body and soul together. It's not easy. With part-time work you find that you are taking whatever extra hours you can get, and people are working in many different locations to try and make a living. It's terribly difficult. There are no benefits. There is no security in those jobs - often they are casual as well - and it's a very difficult life for anybody who is relegated to that role. If we're losing full-time jobs that have benefits and we're replacing them with part-time jobs, it's just not adequate for making a living, for people who need to make a living.

Madam Speaker, the bill before us is really talking, as I said, about accountability. It's specific to the economic development assistance that is given out by the Province of Nova Scotia. I've been a member here since 2003, and I did not see the kind of numerous agreements that have been entered into - as we have seen in the last three years, we did not see under the previous government, is what I'm trying to say. It's very funny. We had a Progressive Conservative Government, which one might have thought would be doing more of that. It wasn't as apparent. Suddenly we have a government that's almost - well, it's over \$0.5 billion that they have put forth - \$590 million given to just six corporations. Some of that, of course, is promised; some of that is not out the door yet, but some of it is out the door to companies that have closed their doors and left the province. Probably the most notable there is Bowater.

Bowater got a chunk of change, \$25 million or more, and they bought land. I understand that the people of Nova Scotia now own more land on the South Shore. But that \$25 million for land did not go into helping the company or helping the plant to continue to operate. It went straight out to the parent company in Quebec. We know it went to support and to shore up the plants that were competing with the Bowater plant, and so it was just one step quicker, really, in the closure of our plant in Liverpool.

That was one mistake right there, to see that much money committed and to see the plant close in less than six months. Even the people in Queens who we spoke to in February last year thought it might be good for a couple of years. They weren't optimistic that this plant had a long time to operate. They felt the industry was changing, that probably the demand for newsprint was going to dictate that their plant wouldn't be operating for a long time, but nobody expected it would be such a short period of time. This assistance or bailout was completely misguided, and again, it adds millions of dollars toward this total figure of \$590 million that we're talking about over the last number of years.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of other projects so I'd like to mention them as well. Certainly Port Hawkesbury is another one and what is interesting is not only the amount of government support but the fact that in order to continue on, the company has wrestled huge concessions from labour, from the municipality, from Nova Scotia Power. Everybody has been pushed to the wall on this. You have to look at whether or not it's going to be for the best all the way around. I think it has been a tremendously difficult project and support from the Government of Nova Scotia.

Wouldn't it be nice if this bill were in place and passed and was proclaimed and we actually could see the details of that agreement? What has the Government of Nova Scotia committed to? We would see not just the 200 or 300 pages, Madam Speaker, we'd actually get to see the details. We'd get to have a summary. We'd know what the commitments were and we'd be able to track them against a timeline. That's what we want; we want to be able to say to Nova Scotians, you can see what deals have been entered into by the Province of Nova Scotia with your hard-earned tax dollars.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker, it is \$590 million to date, in the NDP mandate, given to six corporations, several of whom have closed their doors, one that is about to close their doors, and no job guarantees and, in fact, fewer people working in those companies than there were before.

Madam Speaker, I know that we will hear some more good speakers on this subject and I look forward to their input. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It has been interesting to listen to the member for Halifax Clayton Park speak to Bill No. 103 but I think it's somewhat ironic that the Leader of the Official Opposition would bring forward a bill about accountability and economic development. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should be looking to his right and chat with the member for Cape Breton South about when he was Minister of Economic Development, but perhaps that may not help to educate the Liberal Leader because when the member for Cape Breton South was the Minister of Economic Development, he actually spent more time under RCMP investigation for influence peddling than he did helping the economy in this province.

Madam Speaker, I would like to table an article, which I'm ready to do now, from the Charlottetown Guardian from June . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member is not allowed to use the terminology "influence peddling". I would ask you to retract that terminology - rephrase it.

MR. MORTON: I'll retract that phrase. Madam Speaker, I'd like to table an article, nonetheless, from the Charlottetown Guardian, from June 1999, to remind the Leader of the Official Opposition and to remind, in fact, all Nova Scotians that the Liberal Party's track record on economic development is questionable, at best.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to table an article from the Daily News, an independent newspaper that some of us here will remember, in which an independent business lobbyist called for the Department of Economic Development to be shut down because it had overspent its budget by \$18.5 million, also under the watchful eye of none other than the MLA for Cape Breton South.

Madam Speaker, in fact the department didn't get shut down, it only remained mired in controversy during the MLA for Cape Breton South's tenure as minister. However, to continue this little historical tutorial, the Leader of the Third Party changed the direction a little bit, took care of the shutdown of Economic Development when he was the chief of staff for the Tories. Under the watchful eye of the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives, the Department of Economic Development was reduced to an office, complete with job cuts and a slash in the budget of more than 15 per cent. Madam Speaker, I will table an article from the Canadian Press that, in fact, states these facts.

I think I'd like to remind you, when we came into office in 2009 we were subjected, as has been pointed out in this House earlier today, to the worst economic record in Canada for 20 years. That's part of the mess that we inherited.

Madam Speaker, the neglect and the mismanagement, just to use another example, had allowed the deficit for road development to have risen to \$4 billion. Together, those two Parties on the other side had run up a debt of more than \$12 billion. So it's obvious to me, and it should be obvious to every member of this House, that when it comes to economic development, the Opposition are best left right where they are - in Opposition. (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, as I'm reflecting on my response to Bill No. 103, what I want to say (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind all the members that it gets a little loud. I do have to listen to the speaker to make sure that he is speaking on the intent of the bill.

AN HON. MEMBER: And he hasn't spoken to it yet.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, and I would remind the member also to make sure that you are speaking on the bill.

The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. MORTON: Madam Speaker, in fact, I have been speaking and will continue to speak to Bill No. 103 because our government has been up front and forthcoming with the details of the investments we've made, in every area. We, in fact, have nothing to hide. Last year, when we created the jobsHere fund, we did that in large part to do what we said we would do and that's to increase the transparency that's involved in the investments that are made in Nova Scotia and to keep Nova Scotians informed of what those investments mean.

In addressing Bill No. 103 in the direction they have, what I would like to say is that they're willfully misleading Nova Scotians and causing unnecessary confusion. Quite frankly, that's not very responsible. The fact is Nova Scotians, not just here in this House, but Nova Scotians all over this province expect this government (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. Order. The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. MORTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the fact is (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. MORTON: The fact, Madam Speaker, is that Nova Scotians expect their government to make sound investments in creating good jobs and they expect this government to help grow the economy, while being accountable for the tax dollars that are invested. As with all investments, sometimes certain information must remain confidential to protect the competitive interests of Nova Scotian businesses. I think Nova Scotians understand that. I don't know if the members of the Opposition understand that but it's part of doing business and if this information was not kept confidential, businesses may lose their competitive advantage in the province and around the world, or worse, and certainly this would be worse, they might go out of business, costing Nova Scotian workers (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. This is the last time I'm going to ask and I would advise the members, if they have something to say, if it's a conversation they're having with another member, take it outside the Chamber. I need to be able to hear the member.

The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. MORTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The point that I was trying to make is that if some information is not kept confidential at the right times, it may create very serious difficulties for a business. It may help businesses lose their competitive advantage or it may actually force business failures and business failures would cost Nova Scotian workers the good jobs that they deserve.

There has been some talk in the introduction to Bill No. 103 that the province has given millions of dollars to six large companies and has laid off 1,300 workers. Those numbers, in fact, are fiction. The honourable member who used those numbers in the House is misleading Nova Scotians. Here are some real numbers, if I could speak to that more directly, Madam Speaker. The shipbuilding contracts promised 11,000 jobs during peak production and promised \$2.8 billion in additional revenue over the next 19 years. This is an investment in our future.

The province invested, as has also been pointed out in this House on many occasions so you would think the members of the Opposition would have heard it, that the province has invested millions, to leverage billions of dollars, far into the future.

The Opposition, in pointing out things in the way that they have, is playing with the facts to suit its own purpose. Despite what the Opposition claims, employment is up in this province by 8,800 jobs and unemployment is down and remains at its lowest in the region.

These, Madam Speaker, are the facts. Provincial investments have generated more than \$80 million in the past seven years and that's tens of millions of dollars that has been reinvested in services Nova Scotians rely on, like health, education and community services. This government has helped protect, as everyone in this House knows, 1,400 jobs in the Strait region, 1,400 jobs that are related to the men, the women, the families and the small businesses that didn't lose their jobs, who didn't close their doors and who didn't move out West, because of the decisions that this government took. (Applause)

I would like, Madam Speaker, to speak a little further to Bill No. 103, about the investment in the Irving Shipbuilding contract. The province has released the terms and conditions with as much information as we could, under the rules and regulations related to FOIPOP. The province has invested in Irving Shipbuilding, in order to win the shipbuilding federal contracts. A technical briefing was conducted at the time for media when the loan was announced, and it provided as much detail as possible at that moment.

Another briefing was held recently, where Irving Shipbuilding clearly stated that the company will be accountable through an annual report, on activities and unemployment generation. Here are the details of that investment, Madam Speaker, which I'd like to talk about in relation to accountability and openness: of that investment, up to \$260 million is in terms of a forgivable loan for capital expenditures, up to \$44 million of that investment is

in a repayable loan, which will help access to capital, if needed. All investments are secured by a first charge against real and personal property.

The estimated increase in provincial tax revenue from those investments and from the work that will accrue over the next 19 years is \$145 million per year. That amounts - that's why I used the number before, Madam Speaker - to \$2.8 billion, a 6 per cent investment over 29 years, on a return on investment of 15 to 20 times. Of the \$260 million for capital expenditures, I'd like to say that the loan is based on a forgivable incentive, based on capital costs and employment targets for Irving Shipbuilding and its subcontractors. To earn that forgiveness on the loan, Irving Shipbuilding is required to provide 4,000 direct jobs with Irving and Irving's direct subcontractors. That's what they are required to do, in order to earn that level of forgiveness.

I mentioned, too, that \$44 million in investments have also been made. They were made, in fact, to help secure that contract in the first place. Had those not been made, it's perhaps possible to say, Madam Speaker, that this work would not be something we could look forward to in this province.

This is an interest-bearing loan: it is repayable, fully repayable, over 29 years. It includes human resource development, technology investment and industrial development. It involves the creation of a highly competitive, highly focused marine and ocean tech sector that I think in Nova Scotia, we can benefit from as we go forward. This investment also involves an \$8 million commitment - a \$250,000 a year commitment - to Irving Shipbuilding Centre of Excellence at Nova Scotia Community College. That's designed to train a new generation of skilled tradespersons, with particular emphasis on recruiting and training Aboriginals, visible minorities and women. I think that's a very important investment and it's one that we can monitor very clearly as we go forward. It also will help with an early stage apprenticeship program and a 10-year rolling workforce program.

I want to say, because I know that I'm running out of time, that while much attention seems to be paid by the Opposition toward these large business investments, there are many ways in which the Government of Nova Scotia, in which this government, is involved in investing in small and medium sized businesses. We've lowered the small business tax rate for the third time in as many years. We've created a program that gives new small businesses a tax holiday for the first three years of their existence, a typical tax relief that could be up to \$200,000. We've developed a tax equity credit and a CEDIF investment program that allows the development of new businesses. We've created a film tax credit and we've and we've created a new, digital media tax credit.

These investments and many others like these are designed to encourage entrepreneurship in this province, they're designed to encourage innovation, they're designed to encourage competitiveness, they're designed to encourage increased productivity, and they're designed to encourage Nova Scotians to begin thinking about

their possibilities to find new markets and new ways of doing business, not only here but around the world.

Madam Speaker, the combination of those small and medium sized investments, along with what's happening with those larger contracts - it is all part of a rejuvenation of the business climate of Nova Scotia, one which we think Nova Scotians can be proud of. We're absolutely committed to use these investments to secure a better future, a more transparent future, in fact, for all Nova Scotians, now and tomorrow. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton North.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this evening and speak to Bill No. 103, Accountability and Economic Development Assistance Act. We in the PC caucus are all about transparent and open government, but it's a shame that we have to bring a bill forward in this House in order to get details from the government on the other side. I hear them talking over there about transparency in government and today there were a number of questions asked here about contracts to the Irving shipyard, Daewoo in Pictou and frankly, we didn't get the answers we were looking for. They talk about privacy and the right time and you're not allowed to let out trade secrets. Well the questions we asked today about the shipyard contract - that contract has been awarded, and by awarding that contract, I don't think those trade secrets would be trade secrets anymore.

We looked to this bill for transparency, but there's no guarantee with this bill we're going to get any value out of the money that's being passed out by this government. For decades governments in this province have tried to create, save and lure jobs by offering grants, loans and forgivable loans, by giving out handouts. Over the last year and a half that I've been here, we've seen over \$0.5 billion handed out by this government with no guarantees for jobs and nobody knows where that money has gone, a lot of it.

We need to give the businesses of this province the tools they need to be prosperous here. We need lower power rates, we need lower taxes, lower fuel rates, and we need to cut the red tape that is necessary for businesses to succeed. This government has raised the art of giving handouts to a new level. They hand out money in loans and other giveaways the same as Nova Scotians will be handing out candy to children this evening.

To date, as I said, the NDP Government has given out almost \$0.5 billion; that's billion with a "b". What could small businesses in this province do with that kind of money? With the right tools and that kind of money, small businesses in this province could flourish.

What could we do with that money in the health care system? Over the last 10 years, the health care system has gotten good at what it does. It does open heart surgeries, makes people survive, last longer and live longer. We've seen things like joint replacements that make people live longer and prosperous lives. Those innovations in

health care and education cost money. That \$0.5 billion could go a long way in the health care system.

That \$0.5 billion is quite a treat for those companies, Madam Speaker, but rest assured, there's a trick as well. There always seems to be a trick. Today productivity in Nova Scotia is 30 per cent lower than the rest of Canada and wages are stagnant. Actually, we're the second lowest in the country. The businesses that are surviving here are surviving in spite of the NDP's job-killing policies - 8,600 full-time jobs have disappeared in the last year, and we're hearing just the opposite. Ask the people in Cape Breton who had to leave to go out West to go to work. I have a next-door neighbour who doesn't get to see his children's Christmas concerts or his children's hockey games because he has to go away to work. Real GDP lags behind the national average, and prices are up all over the province.

Madam Speaker, we hear about the possibility of an election. The people here are voting with their feet. Since 2009, the population of Cape Breton has decreased by 3,300 people. That's 3,300 people who don't pay taxes in this province, who don't provide the revenue needed to run this province. So what do we have to do? We have to raise taxes. We know that more than 13,000 people have left our province for opportunities in Alberta and that less than 10,000 of them have returned. That's what bailouts have done for us - just ask companies like Bowater and the people who worked at Bowater.

If bailouts ever worked as an economic tool, they're sure not working now. Bill No. 103 is just a bill. It's a bill to make sure we can get transparency out of this government and to show all of Nova Scotia where they're spending their money. The bill that we're debating today doesn't say, maybe we need to do things differently to create jobs in this province. It says we're going to build a database and a Web site to let people know what we're spending in this province and how much money they're actually taking from your taxpayers' money and handing out to big business. It puts into law procedures on how to document and the details of a failed system.

It may accomplish something. The detailed reporting might convince the NDP that bailouts as a tool for economic development simply don't work. Putting those details on a public Web site, though, won't tell Nova Scotians anything they don't already know, because we know bailouts don't work. We need to make the business community able to flourish through lower taxes, lower power rates, and less government red tape.

So I guess this is a harmless enough bill. It doesn't do anything to create employment, but it will make the people of Nova Scotia aware of where our money is spent. It won't create a single job and it won't prevent a single family from having to turn to a food bank to make ends meet. It won't lure Nova Scotians back to work from Alberta and it won't increase our productivity, but it will tell us where our money is being spent and how it's being spent, and it may create a workplace where people will not just look for money for the sake of looking for it, but that they actually need it. It would create a new

Web site and generate a bunch of reports and forms and may create more economic red tape.

Madam Speaker, Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Continuing to provide handouts even on the provisions of this bill and expecting jobs to appear certainly fits Einstein's definition. It's time to stop this insanity. It's time to do things differently. It's time to make investments that create lasting, quality jobs. It's time to invest in Nova Scotians to harness the skill and work ethic that already exist to transform our economy. This bill won't do that, but it will make sure the people of Nova Scotia know where our money is spent. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I'm certainly proud to have the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on our Bill No. 103, Accountability in Economic Development Assistance Act. It's certainly an important issue and I think with the growing rate of skepticism among Nova Scotians and the people we represent, I think it's a bill that adds credibility and accountability to the way we spend taxpayers' dollars. I do want to thank the member for Clayton Park, the member for Kings North and the member for Cape Breton North for participating in this debate.

I will honestly say that I'm certainly disappointed with some of the comments from the member for Kings North. I think that's completely unfair, that in the scope of this debate and what we're talking about, that he would focus on the member for Cape Breton South, who has done an incredible amount of community service and public service to Nova Scotia. The member for Cape Breton South will certainly serve a lot longer than that member will. (Applause)

The other rich part of that, Madam Speaker, is that the member was talking about accountability and how bad it was, back many years ago. However, it's this government that, when in Opposition, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the former Minister of Finance railed on about the slush fund, they called it, the IEF but this government renamed it to the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund and added \$50 million to it. So there you go, that's pretty rich, to say that we're going to clean it up.

But the reality is, Madam Speaker, people truly are - Nova Scotians truly are - struggling and I think that these are the types of bills and the types of actions we can take as representatives, as MLAs. People are struggling with power bills; they are struggling with education, whether that be post-secondary or families putting their kids through school. Obviously, health care is a concern for most Nova Scotian families and again, we talk about it many times, but jobs, jobs are a major issue in Cape Breton. Fort McMurray - prior to this session beginning I lost my constituency assistant to Fort McMurray because he is going to make double the money and that's the kind of thing you have to do. Luckily for

him, at least he had employment here and he had to go out West to pay the bills, but that's the reality we have.

In the backdrop of that, Nova Scotians - part of their daily routine, is worry. They have to worry about how they make ends meet, they have to worry about how they heat their homes and keep the lights on, and in the backdrop of that, what they have seen is hundreds of millions of dollars going to big corporations in this province. I think that is a concern and I think that this bill speaks to that.

Transparency in economic development assistance is a great idea. It is something that will help taxpayers understand where their money is going, where it's being invested. The government will talk, and as past governments say, will talk about the investments they make and how it's for the betterment of the province. I think if you're applying new legislation and new rules to the funding organizations and the funding options we have in this province, it's not a bad thing. If you're talking about ERDT and the budgets that fall under there, if you're talking about NSBI - of course, the Jobs Fund was referred to as a slush fund by many of the government members when in Opposition.

My question and what I guess I would ask the government side is, why wouldn't we do this? Why wouldn't we consider this bill with regard to accountability for how we spend taxpayers' dollars? I think it's a fair question and we don't have anything to hide. This isn't a confrontational bill. If the government doesn't have anything to hide on how these things were spent and how these expenditures were decided upon, then I think we can put it out there.

Again, to echo some of the comments from my colleague, the member for Clayton Park, DSME is a perfect example. I speak about that many times because I happen to be - there are 52 of us in here, Madam Speaker, we're all accountable. My very first Economic Development Committee meeting, I truly noticed that there was an issue with DSME and the members who were present at that committee - well, it's in Hansard so you can read it for yourself - but the members who were there that day will back me on this. The DSME came in, they gave a great presentation, their facility is top-notch, the product they produced is excellent, I agree with the minister and with DSME on that point, without question.

The problem that existed in their 40-minute presentation, when it was finished was, they have no market for their product. That, at the end of day, is the fundamental of business, we talk about that all the time, and you need revenues. When your revenues exceed your expenses, you make profit. That's how you employ people. That's how you develop. That's how you grow your business as entrepreneurs. We saw many of them in the gallery today, who are doing just that with their own small business. They're using public funds to prop up some portion of their business, whether that be productivity, innovation, what have you. I think that's an important thing to remember. That's what we have to do with our funding.

With DSME, we provided them with a cheque for \$60 million, and the Premier, in his remarks - which I tabled - was that we would have 150 people working in the first year, followed by a lead-up to 500 eventually. We really haven't seen that. We haven't come close to that. There wasn't stability with employment at the Trenton plant, and that's a problem.

My concern with it, and the reason why I bring it up so often - I'm certainly no expert, and I don't claim to be the person who's in charge of economic development for this province, but I think that the minister certainly should be one of those people who scrutinizes every single deal of this magnitude that we make. If we're spending \$60 million tax dollars, the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism has to know that this is a good investment.

Followed by that, he's got people in his department. The deputy minister, who is a capable, competent person; the department, many of whom I know, are competent people. There has to be a process. I can't believe that there wouldn't be a process for how we allocate \$60 million to a corporation without knowing that there has to be some level of security, some way we can guarantee that that \$60 million will be well spent.

If we were to adopt this Bill No. 103, I think this is a way to do that. If DSME was for public scrutiny, I think that obviously now there would be a lot of questions being asked by the public, but going in reverse and rewinding the clock, I think you would see that there would have to be a requirement for the department, for the minister, for the bureaucrats to figure out, okay, we have to have some degree of certainty here. This is a lot of money being invested and we have to know that it's going to work. I'm sure that the department and the minister and the government will say this in reply: we're not throwing money at things without knowing where it's going to go. I hope that there is no actual possibility that's the case.

I think that's what we're kind of seeing here, and that's concerning. If this stuff was public, basically, we would know. The bill talks about economic development assistance to provide upon request the details of economic development assistance, agreements signed with the province, the terms and conditions, and how the recipient is proceeding with regard to meeting any targets or timelines set out in the terms and conditions.

I asked my colleagues, is that not the rules of the game? Isn't that exactly what we would want with taxpayers' dollars? We want to know that our money is protected to a certain extent. Certainly there are world economic factors, certainly there are downturns - that's not new information to anybody - but within the confines of those realities, we have to know that our money is relatively safe.

One quick example I'll use from my hometown is an investment that was recent. It was with respect to the Stream call centre, Stream Global Services, who do a lot of call centre work spread across the entire province. A really close friend of mine, Jeff Clements,

is a supervisor at Stream and he does all the different sites they have across the world with some training and upgrading and those types of things. This is a legitimate organization. Does it mean that you can't help out the Streams of the world if they're located in Glace Bay?

No, but here's the reality. Through NSBI, our government gave \$2.1 million in payroll rebates. As I've said many times, that is the way this money should be spent. NSBI made this decision. The NSBI board, through their payroll rebate program, looked at the specifications for Stream, they looked at the numbers, and they approved this.

Now, there's been no cheque. No money whatsoever changed hands, because Stream has an obligation. The obligation is job targets. It's a job target; it's job guarantees. By the end of five years, Stream has committed to adding X number of employees to its operations in Glace Bay, and only at that time will they be given the \$2.1 million on behalf of Nova Scotia taxpayers. That's how this should be done.

If we had done that with the \$590 million we've spent and given to big corporations, we wouldn't be in this state now. We wouldn't be at a position where we've spent well over \$0.5 billion given to companies that we haven't seen any of the results - and it's not looking like we're going to. So, very important points on that topic, and it's certainly a concern for all of us.

I think that the point about the public and how interested they are - and it ties into my original point - people are skeptical and they want to know where the money is being spent. And everybody feels it to a certain extent. Someone reading the Cape Breton Post or The ChronicleHerald, all the papers or any of the on-line media, from Fort McMurray has to be upset when they see these types of investments that go nowhere. It's very difficult for people to see that; they want to be here with their families.

Again, I've done it; I've had the Alberta experience. I don't care how much money you make, it's not worth being away from your families for any amount of time and that's the reality that we see here.

To publicize the rules of the game and to publicize where we're spending the money and how we spend it and what the details were, that's a pretty fair thing. So for us to publicize the details of the DSME or publicize the details of the Irving agreement on-line for everybody to see is not a novel idea, it's a fair idea. This is where it passes the public's accountability test if they are so inclined, which meant hundreds of thousands of people would be to see those numbers and see what they look like and saw what the progress was, what the deliverables were for the company and for the government. I think it would be able to allow people to see it.

We do the same thing with our expenses. Any Nova Scotian can go on-line and look at the expenditures of every member in this room. Why not do that with their tax

dollars for economic development? It's the same idea - you want to see it, here it is. Here are the rules, here's why the money was given, and here are the job guarantees. Why don't we look at that? It makes a whole lot of sense.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Who did that for you? (Interruption)

MR. MACLELLAN: I put that together myself. The member for Cape Breton West is very pleased with my words.

Again today, with the ministerial statement, I think that provides the focus where we have to be. Corporate welfare, these big handouts, the big cheques, they don't work and they won't work. We've got to get back to - we all use, the minister will use and the government will use the buzzwords and the jargon about productivity and innovation, well, you're seeing it in play today with the people who are in the gallery today, you're seeing that. You will be amazed and I invite you to follow any of those companies of the 46 companies, the 46 SMEs that have received funding through the PIP Voucher Program, follow that money, they'll let you know. You watch how far a small business can stretch \$15,000. You go and witness for yourself how far a small business can stretch \$25,000. (Applause)

One of the natures of an entrepreneur is they want to be employers, they want to grow their business, and they want to grow their ideas. So with that in mind they need people, they need good people. Nova Scotia has good people, but we've got to give them the opportunities to work and have sustainable options, to make sure that there's an economy here that is surviving - very important things to remember. And I think that you look around the province, it isn't corporations, and that's the reality. Our economy is made up of small businesses - 98 per cent of our economy is small businesses.

We think about the big operations and the big employers, but if you look around your own riding, you'll see that we've got all kinds of small businesses - fewer than 10 people. The definition is fewer than 100 people but most are fewer than 10 and they survive the best way they know how. I think it's very important to support and foster that growth of small businesses.

In closing on this bill - I think it's a great bill. I think that being accountable to the public and showing them how we spend and how we use their money is something that's a good idea. If you want to diminish the skepticism in this province amongst taxpayers and voters, and our Nova Scotian people, then that's a way to do it.

I also hope that the minister will continue to follow those investments that use the experts to make decisions, like NSBI, use the private sector. This can't be a decision made at the Cabinet level, let's get the decisions in the hands of the experts; publicize the information so people can see it. This is called accountability - so let's support this bill and

let's show people how we spend their money in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
(Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, the hours for tomorrow will be from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and after the daily routine we'll be calling Bill Nos. 94, 97, 102, 105, 107 and if we have time, Address in Reply.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House adjourn until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favor of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

MR. SPEAKER: The moment of interruption has now arrived and the late debate will begin. The topic for the late debate, as submitted by the member for Queens: "Therefore be it resolved that this House ask the Liberal Party to be clear with Nova Scotians, and explain why they want to adopt an energy scheme that will drive up power prices by 30 to 50 per cent."

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

ENERGY - LIBERAL PARTY: SCHEME - EXPLAIN

MS. VICKI CONRAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to this very important topic this evening: "Therefore be it resolved that this House ask the Liberal Party to be clear with Nova Scotians, and explain why they want to adopt an energy scheme that will drive up power prices by 30 to 50 per cent"

We all know that rising electricity rates have been a topic of concern for Nova Scotians, for many years. Our government certainly understands the burden of rising electricity prices and the effect it has on the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians. This government is committed to finding a solution that will lead to stable power rates.

From day one, our government has been very clear on our plan for energy. We took immediate steps to provide relief to Nova Scotians by rolling back the Tory-implemented 8 per cent HST on home energy. This government has put in place a progressive and forward-thinking, long-term plan, by legislating some of the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the world; a plan that will phase out coal-fired electricity; a plan that will see more green renewable energy produced; a plan that will reduce our carbon footprint, while at the same time addressing the concerning issue of climate change; and a plan that will ensure fair and stable prices that Nova Scotians deserve. Nova Scotians deserve to know what their government is doing to make their lives better.

Our plan to ensure Nova Scotians pay the lowest and fairest rates, while increasing renewable, green energy generation includes supporting projects like Lower Churchill and putting restrictions on Nova Scotia Power and what they can charge ratepayers. All Nova Scotians know exactly where we stand on this important issue. Unfortunately the same is not true of my Opposition colleagues.

My Liberal colleagues have been all over the place in their opinion on the future of electricity rates. They support Lower Churchill, and then they don't support Lower Churchill. They vote against removing the HST from home energy, then they change their minds and they don't seem to know what they think about energy conservation, and that's a real shame as we move forward into the future. No wonder Nova Scotians are questioning whether they are ready to govern. Inexperience comes to mind.

The most worrisome issue to me is that my Liberal colleagues would have Nova Scotians believe that they plan to reduce electricity rates. They have said this all over the province. The Liberals refuse to tell Nova Scotians the truth on what their plan will do. The Liberals' deregulation plan that will allow any company to come in and generate power by whatever means they choose is just irresponsible. Nova Scotians won't see better service and they won't see sustainable energy and they won't see stable rates. Instead they will be exposed to contract confusion, unreliability, and most certainly higher power costs to the tune of 30 per cent to 50 per cent increases in Nova Scotians' rates.

Politicians, Mr. Speaker, in places like Ontario, Alberta and California have said the exact same thing as my colleague, the member for Annapolis has said, that deregulating the market would lead to more competition, which would lead to rates coming down and that simply isn't true. In every single instance, they were proven wrong. In Ontario, in just seven months, rates jumped over 30 per cent and I'll table a document from Ontario's long-term energy plan showing exactly that. In Alberta, bills jumped by 50 per cent and Albertans went from paying amongst the lowest prices for energy to amongst the highest in North America, and that's outrageous.

This is what this Opposition, the Liberal Party, would like to see for Nova Scotians. Does this plan sound like it will be great? (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Queens has the floor. (Interruption)

MS. CONRAD: I wrote my own script, thank you. (Interruption) Then come see my notes. Does this plan, Mr. Speaker, sound like it will reduce rates in Nova Scotia - the plan that the Liberals are proposing? No, it does not. Nova Scotians deserve a government that can formulate and implement a plan - one that is forward thinking and progressive - a government that, before they go out and trumpet a plan, actually does the background research to see that that plan has worked in other regions and our government has done that work and research.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan for Nova Scotia, a plan that protects consumers, that protects the environment and addresses the real issue of climate change, and that plan will also ensure fair, stable rates, well into the future. Any plan that results in 30 per cent to 50 per cent increases in electricity rates needs to be thrown out and the people of our province deserve to know why the Liberal Party thinks Nova Scotians should pay 30 per cent to 50 per cent more on their power rates, a plan that is totally irresponsible and it's not forward-thinking and certainly it's not a progressive plan for this day and age.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I will take my place and I will certainly be interested to read the comments of the members opposite, to explain to Nova Scotians why they're being so irresponsible and inexperienced in their decision to increase rates 30 per cent to 50 per cent - totally outrageous - a plan that does indeed need to be thrown out. I hope that lots of Nova Scotians are watching with interest and are listening with interest as the member opposite, the member for Annapolis, tries to explain to Nova Scotians why they want to pick their pocketbooks during difficult times. I'm really interested in hearing why that would be the case. Charging Nova Scotians 30 per cent to 50 per cent rate increases, again, is irresponsible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. (Applause)

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by agreeing on a few comments that the member for Queens mentioned tonight. These are difficult times for Nova Scotia and in our history, never before have we been under an NDP Government and never before have times been tougher than they have been on Nova Scotian families.

Mr. Speaker, I would agree with her that a government that raises power 30 per cent should be thrown out of office and in the next general election that's exactly what's going to happen to an NDP Government that has increased power rates by 30 per cent. (Interruption) No, don't go. I'm just starting. I'm just getting ready.

Mr. Speaker, she talked about the research that her government has done on the renewable energy project with Lower Churchill. Multiple times we sat in this House and

asked the Premier to tell us how much this project is going to cost. You know what? He doesn't know. That would be akin to a Nova Scotian going out and buying a house and not knowing how much they were going to pay for it. That would be like you buying a car, going home to your spouse and saying, I bought a new car, and when she asks you what you paid for it, you say, I don't know, the salesman will call me tomorrow.

That's the energy platform that this government is running on. She is right. We have done the research, and what we've decided and what Nova Scotians are looking for is leadership on the energy file. Nova Scotians want a choice. They want competition in a highly-regulated energy market in the Province of Nova Scotia. Contrary to what the member just said and contrary to what many members on that side of the House don't understand, the Utility and Review Board just granted that right to municipal units across this province. They have a right to negotiate a power purchase agreement with whoever they want and deliver that energy to their customers.

Do you know what's unique about that? Their customers are gaining cheaper energy from other sources than Nova Scotians are getting. What we have is a government that is endorsing a program that is driving energy bills up instead of fighting for ratepayers. What we have is a government saying no to a program that would provide relief to Nova Scotia customers. They're saying no, what they want is higher power bills. They're endorsing the fact that an energy monopoly in this province has run roughshod over ratepayers for far too long. It's time someone stands up and defends the ratepayers of this province.

She went on and talked about the efficiency tax. You're right, we would lower power bills. We would remove the NDP efficiency tax off every power bill in the Province of Nova Scotia. We would put the burden of that tax where it belongs, and that is on shareholders of Nova Scotia Power and not ratepayers of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

What I find interesting is that we have a government chasing the Official Opposition around the province because they absolutely have zero ideas on how to control the power monopoly in Nova Scotia. What we have is a Premier who, when he wants to take a trip to Newfoundland, he calls up the president of Emera and says, is your plane ready? I need a flight to Newfoundland and Labrador - to sign an agreement that he's been running away from for days; to sign an agreement when he doesn't even know how much it's going to cost the people of this province; to sign an agreement when he doesn't know what's going to happen to the power bills of every Nova Scotian. But he's signing the agreement and trying to trumpet it as the saviour of the power bills in this province.

The only ones who will benefit from the deal that this Premier is bringing forward are the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power and Emera. This government has chosen to stand with the shareholders of Nova Scotia Power. This caucus will stand with the ratepayers of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

This government has gone around this province using the term “deregulation,” knowing full well that’s not what we’re talking about. The good news for us is, Nova Scotians stopped believing this Party a long time ago. Nova Scotians remember when they said, we’re going to balance the budget - oh, sorry, that’s down the road. Nova Scotians remember when they said, we’re not going to raise taxes. We got a 25 per cent increase in the provincial portion of the HST under this government. Nova Scotians remember when they said they were going to take the tax off of power bills; they did that, but what they didn’t tell Nova Scotians is they were going to slide another tax on top of every power bill in Nova Scotia, one that has taken \$46 million out of the pockets of hardworking Nova Scotians.

This government has made life more difficult for Nova Scotia families, and in the absence of any concrete way to improve the lives of Nova Scotians, they’re desperately trying to run around this province and create fiction, desperately trying to hang onto power. I have never before - while I may have disagreed with former governments, I have never seen a government so desperate with who’s gaining on them instead of trying to lead this province.

I find it quite interesting that when the Premier of this province had an opportunity to stand in this House and defend Nova Scotians, to clearly lay out his energy plan - the energy plan of this government going forward - you know what we get from him? The same thing we do every other time. Stumbling and bumbling around about what he might do, but we get no answers - no answers to protect Nova Scotia ratepayers. Nova Scotians are crying out, looking for an alternative and, Mr. Speaker, we’re providing them that alternative and they know it. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, she is right on one thing, we will allow competition in a highly-regulated environment in Nova Scotia because we don’t believe it’s right that only those who are served by municipal utilities get the right to choose to purchase power from someone else; we believe every Nova Scotian should have that choice. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, even their own lawyer that this government appointed to the Utility and Review Board, the consumer advocate said that one thing that we need in this province, to control Nova Scotia Power, is competition. He said the Utility and Review Board is supposed to act as that competition, but what we need is competition. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this House that in New Brunswick they allow renewable-to-retail and guess what, their power rates aren’t climbing like ours.

The former member who just spoke talked about other jurisdictions, I don’t know what is going on in those jurisdictions but I can tell her what’s going on in this province. We have the highest power bills in this entire country or any other province and under this government they’ve gone up 30 per cent. That is real, that is not a figment of anyone’s imagination, that is a real number that Nova Scotia families are suffering under and the only answer from this government.

The lack of leadership is to say, wait a second, we're going to sign a deal with Newfoundland and Labrador. We can't tell you how much it's going to cost, we can't tell you what it's going to mean to your power bill, all we can tell you is what the other people are saying, it's going to hurt you.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians aren't buying it and that's the challenge for this government. Nova Scotians aren't buying the song and dance. They've recognized they elected an inexperienced group of people to govern this province and they're paying the price for it today. No matter where they turn, this government is digging into their pockets. If it's on power bills, we've had a 30 per cent increase, plus this government added an NDP electricity tax to that power bill. If we go and fill up our car, we've got an increase in the HST. Every time we put gas in our car, this government digs deeper into the pockets of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, what do they do with our money? They close emergency rooms, they cut public education and they sign cheques for big business to fill in the amount. And do you know what is even worse? When those businesses cash the cheque, they lay off Nova Scotians. That's not the deal that Nova Scotians were expecting to get from this government. They were looking for some leadership and instead, all they got is a government that has been digging deeper and deeper into the pockets of Nova Scotians at every turn, and yet not supporting the very basic programs that governments should be responsible for, which is ensuring that our children get the top quality public education they deserve, which is ensuring that regardless of where you live in this province, when you need medical care, you can receive it. (Applause)

Instead, what we have is a government grasping at every straw, to mislead Nova Scotians and to misrepresent them. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Nova Scotians were fooled once, they won't be fooled twice. We have laid out and will continue to lay out a very clear direction, where this Party is going to take our province.

I want to remind the members of this caucus and this resolution, it's not the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia, it's the Liberal caucus that will lead this Party forward and it's the Liberal caucus that will provide Nova Scotians with a real alternative, one that they can believe in and one that they can count on, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand and speak for a few moments on this resolution. It was great, it was absolutely great to see the member for Queens stand up and say a few words in this Assembly because, ultimately, in the last number of months, if not number of sessions, we've heard very, very little from the member for Queens. As a matter of fact, all through the whole issue about Bowater, well, you know she showed up on TV and things that were

happening, behind her Premier, but when it came to actually defending her constituents here in the House of Assembly what did we hear from her? Absolutely nothing.

When it comes to boundaries and now the new boundary that's being proposed for Queens-Shelburne, how much have we heard from the member for Queens? Absolutely nothing. So it was great to see that she was able to speak today to this resolution and provide it for discussion and I think the discussion is a valid one, to talk about electricity rates in Nova Scotia.

But, oh my goodness, what were we talking about last night? What emergency debate did we have in this House that the Premier was absolutely falling over himself to make sure that we had in this House of Assembly? It was about power rates and Muskrat Falls and yet the next night, the very, very next night, we have a presentation by the member for Queens about power rates again. So where is the emergency that we needed to talk about last night? To talk about Muskrat Falls - which was actually a very good discussion about what the government is not doing and what they are not going to be doing and what they are signing Nova Scotians on for another 50 years.

Where was the emergency that that had to be discussed before this House if this was the resolution we were going to discuss tonight? (Interruption) Progress. The member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour, soon to be Eastern Nova, is saying that it is about progress. Well let's talk about progress for just a few moments, Mr. Speaker. If a progress means to the NDP that their power rates are going to go up by 30 per cent, then I guess maybe that is progress because since they have been government for the last three years, which seems like an absolute eternity already, they have gone up by 30 per cent. Where is the progress in that one?

Mr. Speaker, we have talked on many occasions in this House, I know our Leader and I know our Energy Critic have talked about power rates, have intervened in the hearings of Nova Scotia Power and have, I think, laid a good process in that we're going to try to save money for Nova Scotians, but if the NDP want to adopt a higher rate, if the NDP want to continue to increase your power bills, well then I guess they are doing a pretty good job, if that is what they are setting as the bar.

I found it interesting last night when the Premier got up - and as a matter of fact this happens on most of the things now that the NDP do. It's all about marketing. It's all about trying to bring the message forward, to try to sell Nova Scotians that this is the right idea, right? That's what they try to do. They continue to try to push things on Nova Scotians that are, in my estimation, half-truths. They are things that are made up by the people at One Government Place that the caucus and the rest of government have to go out and try to sell. That is not how governments are supposed to do things. They are supposed to do things from a measured standpoint. They are supposed to consult with Nova Scotians and come up with the plan that is the best for Nova Scotians, not best for the

party, not best for the NDP brand, not best for the people sitting on that side of the House of Assembly.

You know, it is even to a point where I get a kick where they continue to run their slogans. I really enjoy the slogans that we're continuing to see here in the House of Assembly whether it's jobsHere, whether it's Ships Start Here, Better Care Sooner. You know what I'm hearing from NDP members, you know the people who brought them to this government, you know the people who worked on their campaigns, the people who worked to make sure that they became government, you know what I'm hearing, what the new slogan that I'm hearing from them is? That's not my NDP. That's not my NDP.

I think that honeymoon thing is over where we thought that they were going to be protecting their pocketbooks, that they were going to be protecting their environment, that they were going to be doing all those things that I think, as NDP, that they held dear and dear to their heart. That's not my NDP is what I'm hearing from the folks who I'm talking to. Maybe as a suggestion they should start listening to the people who brought them here, the people who have given so much of themselves to make sure that they are here to actually listen to them, to actually do what they want.

The Premier still refuses to tell us how much this is going to cost people, that is Muskrat Falls and the Maritime Link. Now we tried to get it out of him last night and, of course, he stuck to his slogans. We know today, or as of yesterday, that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador released an independent report that said the cost of Muskrat Falls was going up from \$6.2 billion to \$7.4 billion; that's a 20 per cent increase before a shovel ever hit the ground. Also, we know that as they're reviewing the Maritime Link, that's about \$1.2 billion. Well, if we put the escalator on that, it would put 20 per cent. Well, that's already coming in at what - \$1.7 billion, or somewhere close to that.

The Premier doesn't know what the answer is. I don't know if the Minister of Energy does - I hope he does, because at least we know someone there is going to know what's going on.

When we talk about that, we want to know what the ratepayers of Nova Scotia are going to have to pay for that investment because, don't forget, Mr. Speaker, this is a private corporation. This is a private deal where there are companies going out and going for it. So what ends up happening in the end, of course, is ratepayers will have to pay for this expansion. So what is it worth? What is this hydro energy worth? We've heard it from the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, it could be anywhere - and that's in Labrador, so that's without delivery costs to here to Nova Scotia - somewhere in the range of 12 cents a per kilowatt hour or it could be up to 16 cents. So that is a fair amount more than what Nova Scotians are paying today.

Does it mean it's going to be stable if this all does go through? Yes, okay, I understand trying to have that different mix of energy production, it does make sense. Yet

is it, at any cost? Is it right now? I mean that's the challenge, I think, that we as Opposition Parties have had with that. They will do anything right now regardless of what the cost is. So if the member for Guysborough-Sheet Harbour wants to say that, well, we need to be there, we need to be there, well, I want to know that the people who show up to his constituency office, the people who show up to his constituency office every day who can't pay their power bill, they can't pay it. It's not the fact that, you know, they've held off for a number of months because they were vacationing in Florida - it's because every day they have trouble paying their power bills. So what do we tell them? Do we tell them that all of a sudden it's going to go up by another 30 per cent or another 40 percent, or something like that?

I can't say that to the people who come to my constituency office - when they show up to my constituency office with, I don't know, a \$2,000 power bill, you know, it's amazing how power can get so out of hand and it ends up impacting their quality of life. You know, I had somebody in the other day and they had gone without power since early September. We were able to find a way and whittle away at that bill to make sure that they could get power put back on before it started to get dark at night, before it started to get cold at night. So we're going to say to those people that it's going to get worse because the Premier can't tell us how much that power is going to cost and we're going to tell them that the NDP, they're just far too quick. Let's find a balance of affordability that we can use the existing mix of energy production along with new, green, clean sources to ensure into the future that will start to even out and start to become a place where Nova Scotians can be comfortable.

Mr. Speaker, I may not agree with the plan that's being put forward by the Liberal Party, but I sure as heck don't believe in what's being presented by the NDP as well. There you go, thank you so much. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I want to thank all the honourable members for engaging in a lively debate on a very important topic.

That ends the business of the House today, and we will resume at the hour of 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 6:29 p.m.]